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ABSTRACT

Intended for high-intermediate/advanced level students of English as a foreign language, this book contains selections from the wide range of American literature, from its beginnings to the modern period. Each section begins with a general introduction to the literary period, and then presents essays about individual authors, selections from the author's writings, discussion questions at the end of each prose selection or group of poems, and discussion questions at the end of each chapter. The "National Beginnings" section discusses Benjamin Franklin, Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, Philip Freneau, William Cullen Bryant, Edgar Allan Poe, and Nathaniel Hawthorne. The "Romanticism and Reason" section discusses Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Herman Melville, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Mark Twain, Stephen Crane, and Henry James. "The American Short Story: 19th Century Developments" section discusses Ambrose Bierce, Stephen Crane, Edgar Allan Poe, and Frank R. Stockton. The "Realism and Reaction" section discusses Theodore Dreiser, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Carl Sandburg, Sinclair Lewis, Henry L. Mencken, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and John Steinbeck. The "Modern Voices in Prose and Poetry" section discusses Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Robert Frost, Archibald Macleish, William Carlos Williams, Langston Hughes, Katherine Ann Porter, Saul Bellow, Ralph Ellison, Robert Lowell, Theodore Roethke, Randall Jarrell, and James Wright. The "Modern American Drama" section presents two short plays: "Return to Dust" (George Kamber) and "The Other Player" (Owen G. Arno). Suggestions to the teacher conclude the book. (RS)

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HIGHLIGHTS OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

Dean Curry, General Series Editor

HIGHLIGHTS OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

Based upon a core manuscript by
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CONTENTS

Page

National Beginnings

Introduction		5
Chapter I	Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)	10
Chapter II	Washington Irving (1783-1859)	16
Chapter III	James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851)	22
Chapter IV	Philip Freneau (1752-1832)	29
Chapter V	William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878)	33
Chapter VI	Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849)	39
Chapter VII	Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864)	44

Romanticism and Reason

Introduction		52
Chapter VIII	Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)	57
Chapter IX	Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)	64
Chapter X	Herman Melville (1819-1891)	71
Chapter XI	Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)	77
Chapter XII	Walt Whitman (1819-1892)	82
Chapter XIII	Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)	90
Chapter XIV	Mark Twain (1835-1910)	97
Chapter XV	Stephen Crane (1871-1900)	104
Chapter XVI	Henry James (1843-1916)	112

The American Short Story: 19th Century Developments

Introduction		119
Chapter XVII	Ambrose Bierce (1842-1914?)	120
Chapter XVIII	Stephen Crane (1871-1900)	127
Chapter XIX	Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849)	135
Chapter XX	Frank R. Stockton (1834-1902)	140

Realism and Reaction

Introduction		145
Chapter XXI	Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945)	150
Chapter XXII	Edwin Arlington Robinson (1869-1935)	156
Chapter XXIII	Carl Sandburg (1878-1967)	163
Chapter XXIV	Sinclair Lewis (1885-1951)	169

Chapter XXV Henry L. Mencken (1880-1956) 175
Chapter XXVI F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940) 181
Chapter XXVII John Steinbeck (1902-1968) 185

Modern Voices in Prose and Poetry

Introduction 196
Chapter XXVIII Ernest Hemingway 201
Chapter XXIX William Faulkner 207
Chapter XXX Robert Frost 214
Chapter XXXI Archibald MacLeish, William Carlos Williams and Langston Hughes 221
Chapter XXXII Katherine Ann Porter 231
Chapter XXXIII Saul Bellow 238
Chapter XXXIV Ralph Ellison 244
Chapter XXXV Robert Lowell, Theodore Roethke, Randall Jarrell and James Wright 249

Modern American Drama

Introduction 261
Chapter XXXVI Return to Dust 262
Chapter XXXVII The Other Player 270

Suggestions to the Teacher 282

Acknowledgments 287

The first American literature was neither American nor really literature. It was not American because it was the work mainly of immigrants from England. It was not literature as we know it—in the form of poetry, essays, or fiction—but rather an interesting mixture of travel accounts and religious writings.

The earliest colonial travel accounts are records of the perils and frustrations that challenged the courage of America's first settlers. William Bradford's *History of Plimmoth Plantation* describes the cold greeting which the passengers on the ship *Mayflower* received when they landed on the coast of America in 1620:

> **Being thus arrived in a good harbor, and brought safe to land, they fell upon their knees and blessed the God of Heaven who had brought them over the vast and furious ocean, and delivered them from the perils and miseries thereof, again to set their feet on the firm and stable earth, their proper element. . .**
>
> **But here I cannot stand half amazed at this poor people's present condition; and so I think will the reader, too, when he well considers the same. Being thus passed the vast ocean, . . . they had no friends to welcome them nor inns to entertain or refresh their weatherbeaten bodies; nor houses or much less towns to repair to, to seek for succour.**

If the American wilderness did not provide a hearty welcome for the colonists, it nevertheless offered a wealth of natural resources. "He is a bad fisher [who] cannot kill on one day with his hooke and line, one, two, or three hundred Cods" is a claim made by Captain John Smith in *A Description of New England* (1616). "A sup of New England's air is better than a whole draft of old England's ale" is a testimonial given by Francis Higginson in his *New-England's Plantation* (1630). Higginson adds:

> **Besides, I have one of my children that was formerly most lamentably handled with sore breaking out of both his hands and feet of the king's evil, but since he came hither he is very well over [what] he was, and there is hope of perfect recovery shortly, even by the very wholesomeness of the air.**

Poor Higginson did not fare as well as his son; he died the same year the *New-England's Plantation* was published.

Other writers echoed the descriptions and exaggerations of Smith and Higginson. Their purpose was to attract dissatisfied inhabitants of the Old World across the ocean to the New. As a result, their travel accounts became a kind of literature to which many groups responded by making the hazardous crossing to America. The earliest settlers included Dutch, Swedes, Germans, French, Spaniards, Italians, and Portuguese. Of the immigrants who came to America in the first three quarters of the seventeenth century, however, the overwhelming majority was English.

The English immigrants who settled on America's northern seacoast, appropriately called New England, came in order to practice their religion freely. They were either Englishmen who wanted to reform the Church of England or people who wanted to have an entirely new church. These two groups combined, especially in what became Massachusetts, came to be known as "Puritans," so named after those who wished to "purify" the Church of England.

The Puritans followed many of the ideas of the Swiss reformer John Calvin. Through the Calvinist influence the Puritans emphasized the then common belief that human beings were basically evil and could do nothing about it, and that many of them, though not all, would surely be condemned to hell.

Over the years the Puritans built a way of life that was in harmony with their somber religion, one that stressed hard work, thrift, piety, and sobriety. These were the Puritan values that dominated much of the earliest American writing, including the sermons, books, and letters of such noted Puritan clergymen as John Cotton and Cotton Mather. During his life Cotton Mather wrote more than 450 works, an impressive output of religious writings that demonstrates that he was an example, as well as an advocate, of the Puritan ideal of hard work.

During the last half of the seventeenth century the Atlantic coast was settled both north and south. Colonies—still largely English—were established. Among the colonists could be found poets and essayists but no novelists. The absence of novelists is quite understandable: the novel form had not even developed fully in England; the Puritan members of the colonies believed that fiction ought not to be read because it was, by definition, not true.

The American poets who emerged in the seventeenth century adapted the style of established European poets to the subject matter confronted in a strange, new environment. Anne Bradstreet was one such poet.

Born and educated in England, Anne Bradstreet both admired and imitated several English poets. The influence of these English poets did not diminish when Mrs. Bradstreet, at age eighteen, came to America in 1630. The environment in which she wrote, however, did not remain constant; a developed nation was exchanged for a relative wilderness. That this exchange brought its hardships is evident in these lines from Bradstreet's "Some Verses on the Burning of Our House":

When by the ruins oft I past
My sorrowing eyes aside did cast,
And here and there the places spy
Where oft I and long did lie:
Here stood that trunk, and there that chest,
There lay that store I counted best.
My pleasant things in ashes lie,
And them behold no more shall I.

Mrs. Bradstreet lessens this despair by asserting that earthly possessions are no more than "dunghill mists" when compared to the "richly furnished" house of Heaven. In her rejection of worldly riches, Anne Bradstreet shared a common outlook with her New England neighbors. Her ability to capture the colonial experience in poetry established her place as one of America's most notable early writers.

Michael Wigglesworth, another important colonial poet, achieved wide popularity among his contemporaries with his gloomy poem entitled "The Day of Doom." First published in 1662, "The Day of Doom" is a description of the day of judgment. It tells of the day when God will decide the fate of man. Most people will be sent to Hell; a few, lucky ones will be chosen to go to Heaven. According to Wigglesworth, the start of this final day will be signaled by a bright light at midnight which will wake all the sinners:

They rush from beds with giddy heads,
and to their windows run,
Viewing this light which shone more bright
than doth the noonday sun.

Many people will try in vain to escape their final judgment:

Some hide themselves in caves and delves,
in places underground:
Some rashly leap into the deep,
to escape by, being drowned:
Some to the rocks (O senseless blocks!)
and woody mountains run,
That there they might this fearful sight,
and dreaded presence shun.

Wigglesworth concludes that escape will be impossible. Inevitably, "man must and will accept his fate on 'The Day of Doom.'"

In the colonies south of Wigglesworth's New England, less gloomy poets and essayists wrote. But the southern colonies did not have the printing facilities found in New England, and no poet elsewhere achieved the popularity of Michael Wigglesworth.

Twentieth century literary scholars have discovered the manuscripts of a contemporary of Wigglesworth named Edward Taylor who produced what is perhaps the finest seventeenth century American verse. Writing much of his poetry as a mental exercise—or "Meditation"—to prepare him for his duties as a minister, Taylor filled his works with vivid imagery. Here, for example, are Taylor's descriptions of the unworthy heart of man:

A sty of filth, a trough of washing swill,
A dunghill pit, a puddle of mere slime.
A nest of vipers, hive of hornet's stings,
A bag of poison, civet box of sins.

Taylor never published any of his poetry. In fact, the first of Edward Taylor's colonial poetry did not reach print until the third decade of the twentieth century.

Taylor, like many of the early colonial writers, was an immigrant whose writing was

influenced by his early experiencies in England. As the decades passed new generations of American-born writers became important. Boston, Massachusetts, was the birthplace of one such American-born writer. His name was Benjamin Franklin.

Benjamin Franklin was a brilliant, industrious, and versatile man. Starting as a poor boy in a family of seventeen children, he became famous on both sides of the Atlantic as a statesman, scientist, and author. Despite his fame, however, he always remained a man of industry and simple tastes.

Franklin's writings range from informal sermons on thrift to urbane essays. He wrote gracefully as well as clearly, with a wit which often gave an edge to his words. Though the style he formed came from imitating two noted English essayists, Addison and Steele, he made it into his own. His most famous work is his Autobiography.

Franklin's Autobiography is many things. First of all it is an inspiring account of a poor boy's rise to a high position. Franklin tells his story modestly, omitting some of the honors he received and including mention of some of his misdeeds, his errors as he called them. He is not afraid to show himself as being much less than perfect, and he is resigned to the fact that his misdeeds will often receive a punishment of one sort or another. Viewing himself with objectivity, Franklin offers his life story as a lesson to others. It is a positive lesson that teaches the reader to live a useful life. In fact, the Autobiography is a how-to-do-it book, a book on the art of self-improvement.

The practical world of Benjamin Franklin stands in sharp contrast to the fantasy world created by Washington Irving. Named after George Washington, the first president of the United States, Irving provided a young nation with humorous, fictional accounts of the colonial past. Many of Irving's other writings take the reader to foreign lands, especially to Spain at the time of the Moors. But his tales of colonial America remain his most enduring contributions to American and world literature.

The Dutch culture in colonial New York was of particular interest to Irving. He published a mock-serious history of the New York of colonial times which shows his sly humor and general good nature. This same geographic area provides the background for Irving's best known work, the short story "Rip Van Winkle."

"Rip Van Winkle" is a humorous tale of a lazy villager in the mountains of upstate New York. While hunting, Rip meets some mischievous Dutch gnomes. He drinks with them, and through the power of the drink falls asleep for twenty years. On awakening he makes his unsteady way back to his village. Rip finds the village greatly changed. When he went to sleep it was still under British rule. Now it is a part of the United States, the new nation formed as a result of the Revolutionary War. Though he is confused by the changes that have come with democracy, he gets used to them. By the end of the story he is back at the village tavern, drinking and ready to tell any stranger about his remarkable slumber.

Through "Rip Van Winkle" and several other stories Irving helped to create what might be called an American mythology. This mythology is made up of stories of the American past so widely read and told that nearly every American recognizes them.

Another writer, James Fenimore Cooper, contributed two of the great stock figures of American mythology: the daring frontiersman and the bold Indian. Cooper's exciting stories of the American frontier have won a large audience for his books in many parts of the world. Some students of literature may find fault with the artificial speech and actions of Cooper's heroines. Yet the figures in his novels helped create that part of American mythology most popular today: the story of the cowboy and the winning of the American West.

While prose was contributing to the development of an American mythology, the first poetry in the United States was also being written. Philip Freneau, one of the first poets of the new nation, wrote in a style which owed something to English models. This debt can be seen in the elaborate language and the savoring of emotion which characterizes much of Freneau's verse. His subject matter, however, makes him a truly American poet. In collaboration with Hugh Brackenridge, another early national writer, Freneau wrote a college commencement poem in 1772 entitled "The Rising Glory of America." The future of his country was always a subject of interest for poet and citizen Freneau.

During the Revolutionary War Freneau became an ardent supporter of the American cause. While on sea duty he was captured by the British and placed aboard a prison ship, an experience which inspired a long poem entitled "The British Prison Ship." He wrote a number of other long poems, but he was at his best in his short lyrics, such as "The Wild Honey Suckle." Many of these short works, including "On the Emigration to America," "The Indian Burying Ground," and "To the Memory of the Brave Americans," deal with American subjects, and it is for these poems that Freneau is best remembered today.

If Freneau can be considered one of America's first great nationalist poets, William Cullen Bryant merits a claim to being one of America's first naturalist poets. Born after the Revolutionary War, Bryant turned to nature as a source for poetic inspiration. "Thanatopsis," the name of his most famous nature poem, is a Greek word meaning "view of death." The opening lines assert:

To him who in the love of nature holds
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks
a various language . . .

From this idea of nature Bryant develops a view of death which represents a sharp break from the Puritan attitude toward man's final destiny. To the Puritans, death was seen as a preliminary to an afterlife. Bryant, however, treats death as part of nature, the destiny of us all, and the great equalizer. He takes comfort, not from the expectation of an afterlife, but from the large and important company of human beings who have gone before and who will follow to the great tomb of man. Bryant adds that man should live in such a way that he will not be afraid to die.

So live, that when thy summons comes . . .
Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night,
Scourged to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

After "Thanatopsis," Bryant wrote many lyrics which were lighter in tone. Through these poems, too, he tried to teach a lesson to the reader. In some of Bryant's poems his love of nature was modified to include the belief in a God who guides man's destiny both in life and in death. "To a Waterfowl," one of Bryant's best-known poems, ends with the lines:

He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright.

Many of Bryant's poems have themes which are typical of nineteenth century American verse. He writes about the spiritual sustenance to be found in nature and of the beauty of brooks, trees, and flowers. He idealizes the advantages of life in the country over life in the city. He composes love lyrics. He looks around him for his subjects, and as a result both they and their settings are American. Moreover, he has a number of poems based on famous events in American history. One, for example, is the "Song of Marion's Men," which celebrates the daring exploits of a Revolutionary War cavalryman named Francis Marion.

The next notable American poet, Edgar Allan Poe, was also a master of the prose tale. A gifted, tormented man, Poe thought about the proper function of literature far more than any of his predecessors, with the result that he became the first great American literary critic. He developed a theory of poetry which was in disagreement with what most poets of the mid-nineteenth century believed. Unlike many poets, Poe was not an advocate of long poems. According to him, only a short poem could sustain the level of emotion in the reader that was generated by all good poetry.

In literature and the arts there are certain great trends and movements that appear and reappear. One is called Romanticism, and Poe was a major Romantic writer. The individual instead of the group, the wild instead of the tame, the irregular instead of the regular are features stressed by Romantic writers. Poe was particularly interested in the decadent aspects of these features of Romanticism. Both in his poetry and in his short stories he wrote about dying ladies, about sickness, about abnormal rather than normal love. Besides the Romantic writing that he did so effectively, Poe also pioneered in

the development of the detective story. He prided himself on his ability to reason, and several of his best short stories are justly noted for their deductive skill. The strange world depicted in many of Poe's writings was the product of his fertile mind and was never intended to reflect the real world, in America or elsewhere.

The next great American Romanticist, however, drew on America for both characters and settings, and his work, though theoretical and philosophical, does mirror the attitudes and mores of the time. He was a Dry New Englander named Nathaniel Hawthorne. Although he wrote no poetry, his short stories and novels still rank among the best that America has produced.

Though Hawthorne wrote about various subjects and various times, his favorite theme was Puritan New England. The Puritan punishment of sexual sin becomes the vehicle for his best novel, The Scarlet Letter, a treatment of the effects of sin on the human spirit. The Letter is an "A," and stands for adultery. After her sin is discovered, the heroine of the novel is required to wear the letter on the bosom of her dress the rest of her life. This public penance eventually brings about the expiation of her sin. Her partner in sin, whose involvement is not discovered, lives secretly with his guilt and is eventually destroyed. In much of his fiction, Hawthorne examines the development and results of evil. The dark side of the human character attracted him profoundly.

One of the most skillful ways in which Hawthorne developed his type of Romanticism was through the use of symbols, through making one thing stand for another. A black veil represents the wickedness of mankind; a marble heart represents an individual's unpardonable sin; a garden of poisonous flowers represents hell.

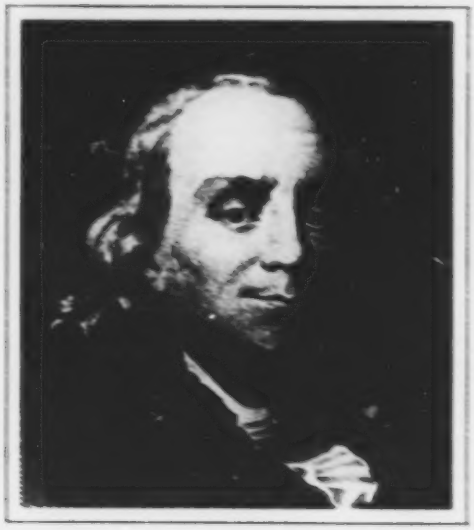
Even when Hawthorne's touch is light, his observation is somber. For example, in the story "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment," Hawthorne provides a whimsical variation on the "Fountain of Youth" idea. The doctor himself seems more of a magician than a physician. One afternoon he offers four aristocratic, venerable friends a mysterious drink that will renew their youth. They accept it, certain that they will avoid the mistakes they made the first time they were young. But during the brief afternoon when their youth returns, they show that they have learned nothing through experience. Hawthorne pictures them as they re-enact their youthful mistakes. At the end of the story the reader realizes that a "Fountain of Youth" does not exist. But the doctor's four old friends, unconvinced, resolve to go out to find it.

"Dr. Heidegger's Experiment" illustrates another side of Hawthorne's art: his concern for the supernatural. He never quite says anywhere in his fiction that something is supernatural, but often suggests it. The reader is not certain that the drink in "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment" is a magical one; it may be that the old friends simply delude themselves into thinking so. Here as elsewhere, Hawthorne presents material on the borderline between fact and fancy.

With Hawthorne we have come full circle. We have returned to the Puritans of early New England with whom we began. We have seen an American literature gradually develop. We have seen the emergence of several gifted writers, and by the middle of the nineteenth century, we have encountered two writers of world stature, Poe and Hawthorne. With them American literature is well on its way. It will take new directions, and it will vary in quality, but from now on it will have a contribution to make not only to English-speaking peoples but to the world at large.

CHAPTER I

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN



BENJAMIN FRANKLIN (1706-1790)

In reality there is perhaps no one of our natural passions so hard to subdue as pride. Disguise it, struggle with it, beat it down, stifle it, mortify it as much as one pleases, it is still alive, and will every now and then peep out and show itself; you will see it, perhaps, often in this history; for even if I could conceive that I had completely overcome it, I should probably be proud of my humility.

—from his Autobiography

Franklin (1706-1790) was a universal genius who did not realize that his *Autobiography* would eventually become a classic of its kind. The part of it given here shows the beginnings of his personal, civic, and political success, yet the account is uncolored by vanity. Franklin shows us that he is a human being as well as a successful man.

Though his style of writing was clear and even plain in his time, we now find it a bit hard to read. It has many long words, often from the Latin language, and long sentences. But we must remember that he was writing two centuries ago.

It is true that Franklin's style is formal. The organization of much of what he says —if not how he says it—is informal, however. In his famous *Autobiography*, in particular, he talks first about one thing and then another with little attempt at connecting them. In the part of the *Autobiography* reprinted below he talks first of all about how he studied language—something you are doing now—then about family matters, and finally about the club he founded called the Junto. Even in these few pages we can see a man of versatile energy and new ideas.

Of course, not all of his ideas were new. In some cases he simply became the most prominent advocate of old ones, especially the beliefs that we should work hard and that we should save our money. These principles had been current since Puritan times but Franklin spread them widely by putting them into a popular almanac, or calendar, called *Poor Richard's Almanac*, which he himself printed. It contained many popular sayings such as "God helps them that help themselves," "Laziness travels so slowly that poverty soon over-

takes him," and "Beware of little expenses; a small leak will sink a great ship."

SELECTION I

Franklin began writing his autobiography when he was 65 years old. Vacationing with his friend, Jonathan Shipley, in Hampshire, he determined to use his unwanted leisure to give an account of his ancestry and early life to his son, William, then governor of New Jersey. After setting down a list of events and topics to be discussed, he composed 68 pages of manuscript, carrying the story of his life down to 1730. He may have sent this manuscript to his son, although there is no real proof that he did so. At any rate, busy with political affairs, he forgot about his memoirs for eleven years. In 1782, living at Passy, a suburb of Paris, he received a letter from an American friend in which was enclosed a copy of the first portion of the autobiography (how obtained, no one knows), with the urgent suggestion that it be continued. After consultation with his French friends, who agreed that the project should be completed, Franklin wrote fourteen more pages in 1784. In this portion he described his effort to learn virtue by a chart system; he was over 78 years old when he composed it. Four years later, back in Philadelphia, he added a third section of 117 pages, and in 1790, a few weeks before his death, he wrote still a fourth part of seven and one-half pages. Although his memoirs were eagerly awaited, it was, through circumstances too complicated to describe here, many years before there was an edition based on the original manuscript. John Bigelow's transcription, first published in 1868, is now known to be far from accurate, so far as Franklin's capitalization, punctuation, and sentence structure are concerned. A definitive edition based upon the original manuscript in the Henry E. Huntington Library and prepared by the late Max Farrand, embodies careful study of the innumerable interlinear changes.

From The Autobiography

I had begun in 1733 to study languages; I soon made myself so much a master of the French as to be able to read the books with ease. I then undertook the Italian. An acquaintance, who was also learning it, used often to tempt me to play chess with him. Finding this took up too much of the time I had to spare for study, I at length refused to play any more, unless on this condition, that the victor in every game should have a right to impose a task, either in parts of the grammar to be got by heart, or in translations, etc., which tasks the vanquished was to perform upon honor, before our next meeting. As we played pretty equally, we thus beat one another into that language. I afterwards with a little painstaking, acquired as much of the Spanish as to read their books also.

I have already mentioned that I had only one year's instruction in a Latin school, and that when very young, after which I neglected that language entirely. But, when I had attained an acquaintance with the French, Italian, and Spanish, I was surprised to find, on looking over a Latin Testament, that I understood so much more of that language than I had imagined, which encouraged me to apply myself again to the study of it, and I met with more success, as those preceding languages had greatly smoothed my way.

From these circumstances, I have thought that there is some inconsistency in our common mode of teaching languages. We are told that it is proper to begin first with the Latin, and, having acquired that, it will be more easy to attain those modern languages which are derived from it; and yet we do not begin with the Greek, in order more easily to acquire the Latin. It is true that, if you can clamber and get to the top of a staircase without using the steps, you will more easily gain them in descending; but certainly, if you begin with the lowest you will with more ease ascend to the top; and I would therefore offer it to the consideration of those who superin-

tend the education of our youth, whether, since many of those who begin with the Latin quit the same after spending some years without having made any great proficiency, and what they have learned becomes almost useless, so that their time has been lost, it would not have been better to have begun with the French, proceeding to the Italian, etc.; for, though after spending the same time they should quit the study of languages and never arrive at the Latin, they would, however, have acquired another tongue or two that, being in modern use, might be serviceable to them in common life.

After ten years' absence from Boston, and having become easy in my circumstances, I made a journey thither to visit my relations, which I could not sooner well afford. In returning, I called at Newport to see my brother, then settled there with his printinghouse. Our former differences were forgotten, and our meeting was very cordial and affectionate. He was fast declining in his health, and requested of me that, in case of his death which he apprehended not far distant, I would take home his son, then but ten years of age, and bring him up to the printing business. This I accordingly performed, sending him a few years to school before I took him into the office. His mother carried on the business till he was grown up, when I assisted him with an assortment of new types, those of his father being in a manner worn out. Thus it was that I made my brother ample amends for the service I had deprived him of by leaving him so early.

In 1736 I lost one of my sons, a fine boy of four years old, by the smallpox, taken in the common way. I long regretted bitterly, and still regret that I had not given it to him by inoculation. This I mention for the sake of parents who omit that operation, on the supposition that they should never forgive themselves if a child died under it; my example showing that the regret may be the same either way, and that, therefore, the safer should be chosen.

Our club, the Junto, was found so useful, and afforded such satisfaction to the members, that several were desirous of introducing their friends, which could not well be done without exceeding what we had settled as a convenient number, viz., twelve. We had from the beginning made it a rule to keep our institution a secret, which was pretty well observed; the intention was to avoid applications of improper persons for admittance, some of whom, perhaps, we might find it difficult to refuse. I was one of those who were against any addition to our number, but, instead of it, made in writing a proposal, that every member separately should endeavor to form a subordinate club, with the same rules respecting queries, etc., and without informing them of the connection with the Junto. The advantages proposed were, the improvement of so many more young citizens by the use of our institutions; our better acquaintance with the general sentiments of the inhabitants, on any occasion, as the Junto member might propose what queries we should desire, and was to report to the Junto what passed in his separate club; the promotion of our particular interests in business by more extensive recommendation, and the increase of our influence in public affairs, and our power of doing good by spreading through the several clubs the sentiments of the Junto. . .

14

SELECTION I

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. (a) What role did the game of chess play in Franklin's study of foreign languages? (b) What languages did Franklin learn? (c) How did learning these languages help him?
2. What is Franklin's idea regarding how languages should be taught?
3. In what way did Franklin repay his brother for the problem he caused him in earlier years?
4. (a) What was Franklin's reaction to inoculation against smallpox? (b) Why did he feel the way he did?
5. According to Franklin, what were the advantages of forming additional clubs subordinate to the Junto?

SELECTION II

Franklin was a leading American citizen of his day. He was civic-minded, believing that he should do what he could to make his city the best possible place to live in. In the second selection from the *Autobiography* he explains to us how his interest in public affairs began. He started by trying hard to be a good citizen in Philadelphia. He went on to be a good citizen of the new United States. And he ended by becoming, because of his wisdom and enterprise, a citizen of the world. In this excerpt from his *Autobiography* he describes the way he went about improving Philadelphia's police and fire protection.

From The Autobiography (Continued)

I began now to turn my thoughts a little to public affairs, beginning, however, with small matters. The city watch was one of the first things that I conceived to want regulation. It was managed by the constables of the respective wards in turn; the constable warned a number of housekeepers to attend him for the night. Those who chose never to attend, paid him six shillings a year to be excused which was supposed to be for hiring substitutes, but was, in reality, much more than was necessary for that purpose, and made the constableship a place of profit; and the constable, for a little drink, often got such ragamuffins about him as a watch that respectable housekeepers did not choose to mix with. Walking the rounds, too, was often neglected, and most of the nights spent in tippling. I thereupon wrote a paper to be read in Junto, representing these irregularities, but insisting more particularly on the inequality of this six-shilling tax of the constables, respecting the circumstances of those who paid it, since a poor widow housekeeper, all whose property to be guarded by the watch did not perhaps exceed the value of fifty pounds, paid as much as the wealthiest merchant, who had thousands of pounds' worth of goods in his stores.

On the whole, I proposed as a more effectual watch, the hiring of proper men to serve constantly in that business; and as a more equitable way of supporting the charge, the levying a tax that should be proportioned to the property. This idea, being approved by the Junto, was communicated to the other clubs, but as arising in each of them; and though the plan was not immediately carried into execution, yet by preparing the minds of people for the change, it paved the way for the law obtained a few years after, when the members of our clubs were grown into more influence.

About this time I wrote a paper (first to

be read in Junto, but it was afterward published) on the different accidents and carelessness by which houses were set on fire, with cautions against them, and means proposed of avoiding them. This was much spoken of as a useful piece, and gave rise to a project, which soon followed it, of forming a company for the more ready extinguishing of fires, and mutual assistance in removing and securing of goods when in danger. Associates in this scheme were presently found, amounting to thirty. Our articles of agreement obliged every member to keep always in good order, and fit for use, a certain number of leather buckets, with strong bags and baskets (for packing and transporting of goods), which were to be brought to every fire; and we agreed to meet once a month to spend a social evening together, in discoursing and communicating such ideas as occurred to us upon the subject of fires, as might be useful in our conduct on such occasions.

The utility of this institution soon appeared, and many more desiring to be admired than we thought convenient for one company, they were advised to form another, which was accordingly done; and this went on, one new company being formed after another, till they became so numerous as to include most of the inhabitants who were men of property; and now, at the time of my writing this, though upward of fifty years since its establishment, that which I first formed, called the Union Fire Company, still subsists and flourishes, though the first members are all deceased but myself and one, who is older by a year than I am. The small fines that have been paid by members for absence at the monthly meetings have been applied to the purchase of fire-engines, ladders, fire-hooks, and other useful implements for each company, so that I question whether there is a city in the world better provided with the means of putting a stop to beginning conflagrations; and, in fact, since these institutions, the city has never lost by fire more than one or two houses at a time, and the flames have often been extinguished before the house in which they began has been half consumed. . .

SELECTION II

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

A. 1. What method did Franklin offer to improve the police system of the city?

2. (a) How did Franklin propose to control fires? (b) What was the result?

B. 1. In the history of your country, what person do you think manifested the same degree of interest in public affairs that Franklin did? How did fire insurance originate in your country? the police system?

2. Do you agree with Franklin's observations about learning a language? Why or why not?

3. Do you think the formation of the Junto was a good idea? Explain your reasons.

4. If you could spend an evening with Franklin, what would you talk about?

5. What kind of person do you think Franklin was? Do you admire him? Why or why not?

True or False Exercises—Place a T before the statement if it is true and an F if it is false. Correct the statement if it is false.

1. The six shilling tax was a fair tax, regardless of a person's income.
2. Franklin's plans for improving the work of the constable were put to use immediately.
3. The members of the Union Fire Company held meetings once a month.
4. The fines paid by members of the Union Fire Company who were absent from meetings were used to buy books for the library.
5. During Franklin's lifetime, the Union Fire Company was the only fire company in Philadelphia.

OPTIONAL PROJECTS

FOR INTERPRETATION

1. Over 200 years ago, Benjamin Franklin wrote: "The rapid progress true science now makes occasions my regretting sometimes that I was born too soon. It is impossible to imagine the heights to which may be carried, in a thousand years, the power of man over matter. Oh, that moral science were in as fair a way of improvement, that men would cease to be wolves to one another, and that human beings would at length learn what they now improperly call humanity!" In your own words explain what Franklin meant by this statement and then in a short written essay, agree or disagree with his point of view as it applies to your life.
2. Choose any of the sayings of Poor Richard and develop the thought of the saying in a short essay or in a short poem or verse.

Sayings From Poor Richard:

"Since thou art not sure of a minute, throw not away an hour."

"Constant dropping wears away stones."

"If a man empties his purse into his head, no man can take it away from him. An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest."

"There will be sleeping enough in the grave."

"Laziness travels so slowly, that Poverty soon overtakes him."

"He that lives upon hope will die fasting."

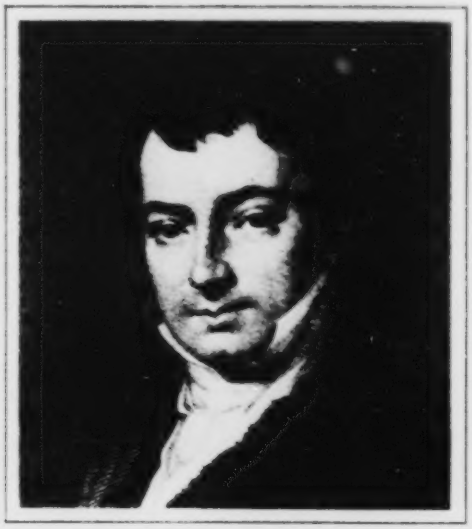
3. Discuss the epigrams of Poor Richard from the points of view that (1) they are universal truths, or (2) that with few exceptions, they are merely guides for Franklin's time and, therefore, not applicable to present-day life. You may like to organize the discussion in the form of a round table debate. Other examples of sayings of Poor Richard can be found in Franklin's *The Way to Wealth*.

FOR INVESTIGATION

In England the 18th century was the age of satire, and in America Franklin shared, to some extent, the satirical view of life popular in England. As has been pointed out, his early literary tastes were partially formed by his reading the essays of Addison and Steele, two leading English satirists of the times. By making use of available library resources, prepare a short research paper in which you demonstrate the influence of Addison and Steele's writings on Franklin's thought and literary style. As a beginning, you should examine Franklin's *Dogood Papers* which were modeled upon the Addison and Steele essays found in the *Spectator*.
In the selection from his writings included in this chapter, you have seen something of Franklin as a public-spirited citizen. Yet, civic affairs was only one of his many interests. He was also a scientist, patriot, businessman, statesman, and man of the world. Choose one of these facets of Franklin's life which interests you, and write a report, based on your reading of Franklin's own works or books written about him, illustrating Franklin, the Scientist, Franklin, the Patriot, Franklin, the Businessman, Franklin, the Statesman or Franklin, the Man of the World.

CHAPTER II

WASHINGTON IRVING



WASHINGTON IRVING (1783-1859)

I was always fond of visiting new scenes, and observing strange characters and manners. Even when a mere child I began my travels, and made many hours of discovery into foreign parts and unknown regions of my native city, to the frequent alarm of my parents, and the emolument of the town-crier. As I grew into boyhood, I extended the range of my observations. My holiday afternoons were spent in rambles about the surrounding country. I made myself familiar with all its places in history or fable. I knew every spot where a murder or robbery had been committed, or a ghost seen. I visited the neighboring villages, and added greatly to my stock of knowledge, by noting their habits and customs, and conversing with sages and great men. I even journeyed one long summer's day to the summit of the most distant hill, whence I stretched my eye over many a mile of terra incognita, and was astonished to find how vast a globe I inhabited.

—From "The Author's Account of Himself" in *The Sketch Book*

Irving (1783-1859) was America's first man of letters, devoting much of his career to literature. In his short stories, he usually starts with standard characters—the lazy husbands, for instance, and the termagant wife. He is able, however, in his better stories to place them in a home-like situation and in surroundings that give the stories a kind of vitality. Irving's choice of incidents and descriptive details adds a note of symbolism to the basic themes, creating an almost Gothic atmosphere.

Irving got the idea for his most famous story, "Rip Van Winkle," from a German legend about a sleeping emperor, which he points out in a mock-scholarly note added at the end of the story. According to the note, the tale originated with Diedrich Knickerbocker, an old Dutch gentleman of New York, who is really a fictional character created by Irving. (The old gentleman's name was later adopted by a group of New York writers of the period, among whom Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, and William Cullen Bryant were the foremost Knickerbockers.) "Rip Van Winkle" is found in Irving's longer work, *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*, published serially in the United States from 1819 to 1820.

The Dutch of New York were just as thrifty as the Puritans from whom Benjamin Franklin got many of his ideas. The Dutch, too, believed in working hard and in saving every cent possible. However, Washington Irving makes the hero of his famous story the complete opposite of the ideal. Even Rip's nagging wife cannot make him change.

Rip Van Winkle, at one point in the story, gets lost in an enchanted forest, but the ghosts he meets prove to be merely si-

lent and indifferent. Beneath the apparent comic burlesque qualities of the tale, signs of decay, sterility, and impotence indicate that it deals with the loss or surrender of manhood. In effect, while Rip falls into a 20-year sleep, he exchanges the best years of his life for a peaceful old age. Meanwhile, his compatriots fight a war and establish a new nation.

But Rip is flexible enough to turn his misfortune into an advantage. First, he escapes 20 years of nagging by his insistent wife. Second, he makes great success as a man who neither minds his own business nor maintains his reputation as a hard worker. Rather, he is a loafer, a gossip, a dreamer, and someone who helps his neighbors and who is liked by children. Rip would rather starve on a penny than work for a pound. . .

SELECTION I

From Rip Van Winkle

In the first excerpt, reprinted below, Rip is described for us. So are his difficulties at home, which he often escapes by going to the local inn to spend his time with his friends. But even the inn is not safe from his wife, and so sometimes Rip takes his dog and goes hunting in the woods.

Rip Van Winkle, however, was one of those happy mortals, of foolish, well-oiled dispositions, who take the world easy, eat white bread or brown, whichever can be got with least thought or trouble, and would rather starve on a penny than work for a pound. If left to himself, he would have whistled life away in perfect contentment; but his wife kept continually dinning in his ears about his idleness, his carelessness, and the ruin he was bringing on his family. Morning, noon, and night her tongue was incessantly going, and everything he said or did was sure to produce a torrent of household eloquence. Rip had but one way of replying to all lectures of the kind, and that, by frequent use, had grown into a habit. He shrugged his shoulders, shook his head, cast up his eyes, but said nothing. This, however, always provoked a fresh volley from his wife; so that he was fain to draw off his forces, and take to the outside of the house—the only side which, in truth, belongs to a hen-pecked husband.

Rip's sole domestic adherent was his dog Wolf, who was as much hen-pecked as his master; for Dame Van Winkle regarded them as companions in idleness, and even looked upon Wolf with an evil eye, as the cause of his master's going so often astray. True it is, in all points of spirit befitting an honorable dog, he was as courageous an animal as ever scoured the woods—but what courage can withstand the ever-during and all-besetting terrors of a woman's tongue? The moment Wolf entered the house his crest fell, his tail drooped to the ground, or curled between his legs, he sneaked about with a gallows air, casting many a sidelong glance at Dame Van Winkle, and at the least flourish of a broomstick or ladle, he would fly to the door with yelping precipitation.

Times grew worse and worse with Rip Van Winkle as years of matrimony rolled on; a tart temper never mellows with age, and a sharp tongue is the only edged tool that grows keener with constant use. For a long while he used to console himself, when driven from home, by frequenting a kind of perpetual club of the sages, philosophers, and other idle personages of the village; which held its sessions on a bench before a small inn, designated by a rubicund portrait of His Majesty George the Third.[1] Here they used to sit in the

1. His Majesty George the Third — King of England at the time of the American Revolutionary War.

shade through a long lazy summer's day, talking listlessly over village gossip, or telling endless sleepy stories about nothing. But it would have been worth any statesman's money to have heard the profound discussions that sometimes took place, when by chance an old newspaper fell into their hands from some passing traveler. How solemnly they would listen to the contents, as drawled out by Derrick Van Bummel, the schoolmaster, a dapper learned little man, who was not to be daunted by the most gigantic word in the dictionary; and how sagely they would deliberate upon public events some months after they had taken place.

The opinions of this junto were completely controlled by Nicholas Vedder, a patriarch of the village, and landlord of the inn, at the door of which he took his seat from morning till night, just moving sufficiently to avoid the sun and keep in the shade of a large tree; so that the neighbors could tell the hour by his movements as accurately as by a sundial. It is true he was rarely heard to speak, but smoked his pipe incessantly. His adherents, however (for every great man has his adherents), perfectly understood him, and knew how to gather his opinions. When any thing that was read or related displeased him, he was observed to smoke his pipe vehemently, and to send forth short, frequent, and angry puffs; but when pleased, he would inhale the smoke slowly and tranquilly, and emit it in light and placid clouds; and sometimes, taking the pipe from his mouth, and letting the fragrant vapor curl about his nose, would gravely nod his head in token of perfect approbation.

From even this strong-hold the unlucky Rip was at length routed by his termagant wife, who would suddenly break in upon the tranquillity of the assemblage and call the members all to naught; nor was that august personage, Nicholas Vedder himself, sacred from the daring tongue of this terrible virago, who charged him outright with encouraging her husband in habits of idleness.

Poor Rip was at last reduced almost to despair; and his only alternative, to escape from the labor of the farm and clamor of his wife, was to take gun in hand and stroll away into the woods. Here he would sometimes seat himself at the foot of a tree, and share the contents of his wallet with Wolf, with whom he sympathized as a fellow-sufferer in persecution. "Poor Wolf," he would say, "thy mistress leads thee a dog's life of it; but never mind, my lad, whilst I live thou shalt never want a friend to stand by thee!" Wolf would wag his tail, look wistfully in his master's face, and if dogs can feel pity, I verily believe he reciprocated the sentiment with all his heart. . .

SELECTION I

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who was Rip's sole domestic adherent?
2. Why does Rip frequently leave his house?
3. Where did Rip meet with other idle people of the village?
4. Who was Derrick Van Bummel and why was he important to the meetings of the junto?
5. How does Nicholas Vedder express his opinions on public matters?
6. How did Rip escape his wife when she came to the inn?

SELECTION II

While in the woods, Rip meets several Dutch gnomes, drinks their magic liquor, and falls asleep for twenty years. He awakens—not realizing the length of his slumber—and returns to his village. The second excerpt from Rip's story begins at this point.

The village has changed greatly. When Rip left for the woods his home was still part of an English colony; now the country is an independent republic. The political discussions in this new republic confuse Rip. Moreover, he cannot find his old friends, most of whom have died during his twenty-year absence. He sees his idle son and namesake and speaks to his daughter. At the end of this second excerpt, and old woman identifies Rip.

The rest of the story, not reprinted here, describes how Rip Van Winkle becomes a village celebrity, ready to tell his strange story to anyone who will listen.

The appearance of Rip, with his long grizzled beard, his rusty fowling-piece, his uncouth dress, and an army of women and children at his heels, soon attracted the attention of the tavern politicians. They crowded round him, eyeing him from head to foot with great curiosity. The orator bustled up to him, and, drawing him partly aside, inquired "on which side he voted?" Rip stared in vacant stupidity. Another short but busy little fellow pulled him by the arm, and, rising on tiptoe, inquired in his ear, "Whether he was Federal or Democrat?"[1] Rip was equally at a loss to comprehend the question; when a knowing, self-important old gentleman, in a sharp cocked hat, made his way through the crowd, putting them to the right and left with his elbows as he passed, and planting himself before Van Winkle, with one arm akimbo, the other resting on his cane, his keen eyes and sharp hat penetrating as it were, into his very soul, demanded in an austere tone, "what brought him to the election with a gun on his shoulder, and a mob at his heels, and whether he meant to breed a riot in the village?"—"Alas! gentleman," cried Rip, somewhat dismayed, "I am a poor quiet man, a native of the place, and a loyal subject of the king, God bless him!"

Here a general shout burst from the by-standers—"A tory! a tory! a spy! a refugee! hustle him! away with him!" It was with great difficulty that the self-important man in the cocked hat restored order; and, having assumed a tenfold austerity of brow, demanded again of the unknown culprit, what he came there for, and whom he was seeking? The poor man humbly assured him that he meant no harm, but merely came there in search of some of his neighbors, who used to keep about the tavern.

"Well—who are they?—name them."

Rip bethought himself a moment, and inquired, "Where's Nicholas Vedder?"

There was a silence for a little while, when an old man replied, in a thin, piping voice, "Nicholas Vedder! why, he is dead and gone these eighteen years! There was a wooden tombstone in the church-yard that used to tell all about him, but that's rotten and gone too."

"Where's Brom Dutcher?"

"Oh, he went off to the army in the beginning of the war; some say he was killed at the storming of Stony Point[2]—others say he was drowned in a squall at the foot of Antony's Nose.[3] I don't know—he never came back again."

"Where's Van Bummel, the school master?"

1. Federal or Democrat — political parties in the American colonies.

2. Stony Point — name of a famous battle of the Revolutionary War.

3. Antony's Nose — name of a mountain.

"He went off to the wars too, was a great militia general, and is now in congress."

Rip's heart died away at hearing of these sad changes in his home and friends, and finding himself thus alone in the world. Every answer puzzled him too, by treating of such enormous lapses of time, and of matters which he could not understand: war—congress—Stony Point;—he had no courage to ask after any more friends, but cried out in despair, "Does nobody here know Rip Van Winkle?"

"Oh, Rip Van Winkle!" exclaimed two or three, "Oh, to be sure that's Rip Van Winkle yonder, leaning against the tree."

Rip looked, and beheld a precise counterpart of himself, as he went up the mountain: apparently as lazy, and certainly as ragged. The poor fellow was now completely confounded. He doubted his own identity, and whether he was himself or another man. In the midst of his bewilderment, the man in the cocked hat demanded who he was, and what was his name?

"God knows," exclaimed he, at his wit's end; "I'm not myself—I'm somebody else—that's me yonder—no—that's somebody else got into my shoes—I was myself last night, but I fell asleep on the mountain, and they've changed my gun, and every thing's changed, and I'm changed, and I can't tell what's my name, or who I am!"

The by-standers began now to look at each other, nod, wink significantly, and tap their fingers against their foreheads. There was a whisper, also, about securing the gun, and keeping the old fellow from doing mischief, at the very suggestion of which the self-important man in the cocked hat retired with some precipitation. At this critical moment a fresh comely woman pressed through the throng to get a peep at the gray-bearded man. She had a chubby child in her arms, which, frightened at his looks, began to cry. "Hush, Rip," cried she, "hush, you little fool; the old man won't hurt you." The name of the child, the air of the mother, the tone of her voice, all awakened a train of recollections in his mind. "What is your name, my good woman?" asked he.

"Judith Gardenier."

"And your father's name?"

"Ah, poor man, Rip Van Winkle was his name, but it's twenty years since he went away from home with his gun, and never has been heard of since—his dog came home without him; but whether he shot himself, or was carried away by the Indians, nobody can tell. I was then but a little girl."

Rip had but one question more to ask; but he put it with a faltering voice:

"Where's your mother?"

"Oh, she too had died but a short time since; she broke a blood-vessel in a fit of passion at a New-England peddler."

There was a drop of comfort, at least, in this intelligence. The honest man could contain himself no longer. He caught his daughter and her child in his arms. "I am your father!" cried he—"Young Rip Van Winkle once—old Rip Van Winkle now!—Does nobody know poor Rip Van Winkle?"

All stood amazed, until an old woman, tottering out from among the crowd, put her hand to her brow, and peering under it in his face for a moment, exclaimed, "Sure enough! it is Rip Van Winkle—it is himself! Welcome home again, old neighbor—Why, where have you been these twenty long years?"...

SELECTION II

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

A. 1. On his return, why is Rip suspected of being disloyal?
2. Who was the first person to recognize Rip?
3. Who was Judith Gardenier?
4. What has happened to Nicholas Vedder? to Brom Dutcher? to Van Bummel?
5. How is young Rip Van Winkle like his father?
6. What two explanations are offered by Judith Gardenier for the disappearance of Rip Van Winkle?

B. 1. What is your opinion of Rip Van Winkle? Is he a tragic or a comic figure?
2. Is there a character in your national literature similar to Rip? If so, compare the two figures.
3. Do you think Rip symbolizes man's desire to flee from responsibility? Support your answer.
4. Would you like to sleep for twenty years? Why or why not? What changes would you expect to see in your society if you were to awaken from a twenty year sleep?
5. Are women more "nagging" by nature than men?

OPTIONAL PROJECTS

FOR INTERPRETATION

1. Washington Irving's effect upon American letters was irrevocable. In his *Sketchbook* and *Diedrich Knickerbocker's History of New York*, he drew upon the enchanting wilderness of his native New York for his artistic material. His writings also made wide use of its legends and folk tales. This influence can easily be traced in later American writers. What writers in the literary history of your country have made use of natural beauty and regional legends and folk tales in a manner similar to that of Irving? Have they also influenced later writers? If so, in what way? Write a composition in which you compare Irving with one of your national writers who also makes use of natural beauty.
2. Irving creates humor by the way he says things. He delights in making ironic, tongue-in-cheek remarks which say just the opposite of what he means; he uses dignified words to produce a half-mocking effect. He also is fond of exaggerating the seriousness of situations. He pretends, for example, that the cleaning of a Dutch parlor is a serious ritual. Select a few sentences from the account of "Rip Van Winkle" which illustrate Irving's special type of humor and in each example point out the words and phrases which help to create the effect.

FOR INVESTIGATION

******** "The Devil and Tom Walker," "The Spectre Bridegroom," and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" are other romantic tales by Washington Irving. Read one of these stories (or all of them if you wish) and be prepared to discuss in class the story and the romantic and humorous elements it contains. You will find the stories in *THE SKETCH BOOK*.

CHAPTER III

JAMES FENIMORE COOPER

JAMES FENIMORE COOPER (1789-1851)

In a democracy, men are just as free to aim at the highest attainable places in society as to obtain the largest fortunes, and it would be clearly unworthy of all noble sentiment to say that the grovelling competition for money shall alone be free, while that which enlists all the liberal acquirements and elevated sentiments of the race, is denied the democrat. Such an avowal would be at once a declaration of the inferiority of the system, since nothing but ignorance and vulgarity could be its fruits. The democratic gentleman must differ in many essential particulars from the aristocratical gentleman, though in their ordinary habits and tastes they are virtually identical. Their principles vary, and, to a slight degree, their deportment accordingly. The democrat, recognizing the right of all to participate in power, will be more liberal in his general sentiments, a quality of superiority in itself; but, in conceding this much to his fellow man, he will proudly maintain his own independence of vulgar domination, as indispensable to his personal habits. The same principles and manliness that would induce him to depose a royal despot would induce him to resist a vulgar tyrant.

From: The American Democrat
in Harry R. Warfel, Ralph Gabriel, Stanley T. Williams, *The American Mind*. New York: American Book Company, 1947.

Cooper (1789-1851) wrote both novels and social criticism. It is his fiction which has become famous, but it is worth remembering that he also wrote books criticizing the shortcomings of democracy in his own country. He is the first important writer to be critical of the United States but he will by no means be the last. His fiction is much more memorable; however, and here below is part of his most noted novel.

The Last of the Mohicans, written in 1826, is the second novel in Cooper's Leatherstocking Series. Consisting of five novels, the series gets it title from one of the names applied to its frontiersman hero, Natty Bumppo, who is also called Deerslayer, Hawkeye, Pathfinder, and Leatherstocking. The five novels tell the story of Bumppo from youth to old age. The other books in the series are: *The Pioneers* (1823); *The Prairie* (1827); *The Pathfinder* (1840); and *The Deerslayer* (1841).

The creation of the character of Natty Bumppo is probably the most significant thing that happened in American literature during the first 50 years of its history. Like Sir Walter Scott and other romantic writers who dealt with historical or legendary characters, Cooper, in his tales about Bumppo, unfolded an epic account. Bumppo, a frontiersman whose actions were shaped by the forest in which he lived, seems to be related in some way to the deepest meaning of the American experience itself.

All but one of the Leatherstocking Tales, *The Pioneers*, is concerned with bloody conflict. Yet the fighting is always intermingled with passages describing the quiet beauty of nature. Perhaps Cooper's interest in painting developed in him his

excellent pictorial imagination which he applies effectively, counterpointing descriptions of conflict and violence with scenes of forest beauty.

A further word about Bumppo. His greatest gift is a reverence for life, a deep understanding of the genius of man. His friendship with Chingachgook is symbolic of Hawkeye's understanding of the differences that exist between peoples. (Chingachgook symbolizes the aboriginal life and culture of America.) The friendship between the two men, which runs through all five Leatherstocking Tales, is one of the great friendships of literature, and it exists because of, not in spite of, their contrasting differences.

SELECTION I

The passage that follows opens when Bumppo (here called Hawkeye) has just saved an English officer from death at the hands of hostile Indians, the Hurons. Their leader is wicked Magua. The good Indians are the Mohicans, led by Chingachgook and his son Uncas. The English officer, named Heyward, is escorting two white girls, Cora and Alice, through the wilderness of upstate New York before the Revolutionary War, when Hawkeye comes to their aid.

From The Last Of The Mohicans

Chapter 12

The Hurons stood aghast at this sudden visitation of death on one of their band. But, as they regarded the fatal accuracy of an aim which had dared to immolate an enemy at so much hazard to a friend, the name of "La Longue Carabine"[1] burst simultaneously from every lip, and was succeeded by a wild and a sort of plaintive howl. The cry was answered by a loud shout from a little thicket, where the incautious party had piled their arms; and at the next moment Hawkeye, too eager to load the rifle he had regained, was seen advancing upon them, brandishing the clubbed weapon, and cutting the air with wide and powerful sweeps. Bold and rapid as the progress of the scout, it was exceeded by that of a light and vigorous form which, bounding past him, leaped, with incredible activity and daring, into the very centre of the Hurons, where it stood, whirling a tomahawk, and flourishing a glittering knife, with fearful menaces, in front of Cora. Quicker than the thoughts could follow these unexpected and audacious movements, an image, armed in the emblematic panoply of death, glided before their eyes, and assumed a threatening attitude at the other's side. The savage tormentors recoiled before these warlike intruders, and uttered as they appeared in such quick succession, the often repeated and peculiar exclamation of surprise, followed by the well known and dreaded appellations of—

"Le Cerf Agile!"[2] Le Gros Serpent![3]

But the wary and vigilant leader of the Hurons was not so easily disconcerted. Casting his keen eyes around the little plain, he comprehended the nature of the assault at a glance, and encouraging his followers by his voice as well as by his example, he unsheathed his long and dangerous knife, and rushed with a loud whoop upon expecting Chingachgook. It was the signal for a general combat. Neither party had fire-arms, and the con-

1. "La Longue Carabine"—French term for "the long rifle."

2. "Le Cerf Agile"—the quick deer. French name given to Uncas because of his agility.

3. "Le Gros Serpent"—the large snake. French name given to Chingachgook. He was so called because of his wisdom, cunning, and prudence.

test was to be decided in the deadliest manner; hand to hand, with weapons of offence, and none of defence.

Uncas answered the whoop, and leaping on an enemy, with a single, well-directed blow of his tomahawk, cleft him to the brain. Heyward tore the weapon of Magua from the sapling, and rushed eagerly towards the fray. As the combatants were now equal in number, each singled an opponent from the adverse band. The rush and blows passed with the fury of a whirlwind, and the swiftness of lightning. Hawkeye soon got another enemy within reach of his arm, and with one sweep of his formidable weapon he beat down the slight and inartificial defences of his antagonist, crushing him to the earth with the blow. Heyward ventured to hurl the tomahawk he had seized, too ardent to await the moment of closing. It struck the Indian he had selected on the forehead, and checked for an instant his onward rush. Encouraged by this slight advantage, the impetuous young man continued his onset, and sprang upon his enemy with naked hands. A single instant was enough to assure him of the rashness of the measure, for he immediately found himself fully engaged, with his activity and courage, in endeavoring to ward the desperate thrusts made with the knife of the Huron. Unable longer to foil an enemy so alert and vigilant, he threw his arms about him, and succeeded in pinning the limbs of the other to his side, with an iron grasp, but one that was far too exhausting to himself to continue long. In this extremity he heard a voice near him, shouting—

"Exterminate the varlets! no quarter to an accursed Mingo!"[4]

At the next moment, the breech of Hawkeye's rifle fell on the naked head of his adversary, whose muscles appeared to wither under the shock, as he sank from the arms of Duncan, flexible and motionless.

When Uncas had brained his first antagonist, he turned, like a hungry lion, to seek another. The fifth and only Huron disengaged at the first onset *had* paused a moment, and then seeing that all around him were employed in the deadly strife, he sought, with hellish vengeance, to complete the baffled work of revenge. Raising a shout of triumph, he sprang towards the defenceless Cora, sending his keen axe, as the dreadful precursor of his approach. The tomahawk grazed her shoulder, and cutting the withes which bound her to the tree, left the maiden at liberty to fly. She eluded the grasp of the savage, and reckless of her own safety, threw herself on the bosom of Alice, striving with convulsed and ill-directed fingers, to tear asunder the twigs which confined the person of her sister. Any other than a monster would have relented at such an act of generous devotion to the best and purest affection; but the breast of the Huron was a stranger to sympathy. Seizing Cora by the rich tresses which fell in confusion about her form, he tore her from her frantic hold, and bowed her down with brutal violence to her knees. The savage drew the flowing curls through his hand, and raising them on high with an outstretched arm, he passed the knife around the exquisitely moulded head of his victim, with a taunting and exulting laugh. But he purchased this moment of fierce gratification with the loss of the fatal opportunity. It was just then the sight caught the eye of Uncas. Bounding from his footsteps he appeared for an instant darting through the air, and descending in a ball he fell on the chest of his enemy, driving him many yards from the

4. Mingo—a name scornfully applied by the Mohicans to their enemies, the Hurons.

spot, headlong and prostrate. The violence of the exertion cast the young Mohican at his side. They arose together, fought, and bled, each in his turn. But the conflict was soon decided; the tomahawk of Heyward and the rifle of Hawkeye descended to the skull of the Huron, at the same moment that the knife of Uncas reached his heart.

SELECTION I

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does Uncas demonstrate his courage?
2. Do you think that the Hurons were afraid of Uncas and Chingachgook? Explain your answer.
3. How was Hawkeye's weapon different from those used by the other combatants?
4. How many Hurons were there?
5. Describe how Cora was saved from being scalped.
6. In your own words, describe the fight.

SELECTION II

In this second excerpt from *The Last of the Mohicans* a general hand-to-hand combat has taken place, now ended except for one duel. The Hurons have been bested by Hawkeye and his allies; Cora and Alice have been saved. The duel in question is between Uncas, the last of the Mohican tribe, and his Huron opponent, Magua. Magua is beaten but escapes. The scene ends in thanksgiving by the good people who have been able to triumph over the bad. The struggle and victory are described in Cooper's stately, old-fashioned prose.

From The Last Of The Mohicans

The battle was now entirely terminated, with the exception of the protracted struggle between Le Renard Subtil[5] and Le Gros Serpent. Well did these barbarous warriors prove that they deserved those significant names which had been bestowed for deeds in former wars. When they engaged, some little time was lost in eluding the quick and vigorous thrusts which had been aimed at their lives. Suddenly darting on each other, they closed, and came to the earth, twisted together like twinning serpents, in pliant and subtle folds. At the moment when the victors found themselves unoccupied, the spot where these experienced and desperate combatants lay, could only be distinguished by a cloud of dust and leaves which moved from the centre of the little plain towards its boundary, as if raised by the passage of a whirlwind. Urged by the different motives of filial affection, friendship, and gratitude, Heyward and his companions rushed with one accord to the place, encircling the little canopy of dust which hung above the warriors. In vain did Uncas dart around the cloud, with a wish to strike his knife into the heart of his father's foe; the threatening rifle of Hawkeye was raised and suspended in vain, while Duncan endeavored to seize the limbs of the Huron with hands that appeared to have lost their power. Covered, as they were, with dust and blood, the swift evolutions of the combatants seemed to incorporate their bodies into one. The death-like looking figure of the Mohican, and the dark form of the Huron, gleamed before their eyes in such quick and confused succession, that the friends of the former knew not where nor when to plant the succoring blow. It is true there were short and fleeting moments,

5 Le Renard Subtil—the clever fox. French name for Magua because of his sly craftiness.

when the fiery eyes of Magua were seen glittering, like the fabled organs of the basilisk, through the dusty wreath by which he was enveloped, and he read by those short and deadly glances the fate of the combat in the presence of his enemies; ere, however, any hostile hand could descend on his devoted head, its place was filled by the scowling visage of Chingachgook. In this manner the scene of the combat was removed from the centre of the little plain to its verge. The Mohican now found an opportunity to make a powerful thrust with his knife; Magua suddenly relinquished his grasp, and fell backward without motion, and seemingly without life. His adversary leaped on his feet, making the arches of the forest ring with the sounds of triumph.

"Well done for the Delawares![6] victory to the Mohican!" cried Hawkeye, once more elevating the butt of the long and fatal rifle; "a finishing blow from a man without a cross will never tell against his honor, nor rob him of his right to the scalp."

But, at the very moment when the dangerous weapon was in the act of descending, the subtle Huron rolled swiftly from beneath the danger, over the edge of the precipice, and falling on his feet, was seen leaping, with a single bound, into the centre of a thicket of low bushes, which clung along its sides. The Delawares, who had believed their enemy dead, uttered their exclamation of surprise, and were following with speed and clamor, like hounds in open view of the deer, when a shrill and peculiar cry from the scout instantly changed their purpose, and recalled them to the summit of the hill.

"'Twas like himself," cried the inveterate forester, whose prejudices contributed so largely to veil his natural sense of justice in all matters which concerned the Mingos; "a lying and deceitful varlet as he is. An honest Delaware now, being fairly vanquished, would have lain still, and been knocked on the head, but these knavish Maquas[7] cling to life like so many cat-o'-the-mountain. Let him go—let him go; 'tis but one man, and he without rifle or bow, many a long mile from his French commerades; and like a rattler that has lost his fangs, he can do no further mischief, until such time as he, and we too, may leave the prints of our moccasins over a long reach of sandy plain." "See, Uncas," he added, in Delaware, "your father is flaying the scalps already. It may be well to go round and feel the vagabonds that are left, or we may have another of them loping through the woods, and screeching like a jay that has been winged."

So saying, the honest, but implacable scout, made the circuit of the dead, into whose senseless bosoms he thrust his long knife, with as much coolness as though they had been so many brute carcasses. He had, however, been anticipated by the elder Mohican, who had already torn the emblems of victory from the unresisting heads of the slain.

But Uncas, denying his habits, we had almost said his nature, flew with instinctive delicacy, accompanied by Heyward, to the assistance of the females, and quickly releasing Alice, placed her in the arms of Cora. We shall not attempt to describe the gratitude to the Almighty Disposer[8] of events which glowed in the bosoms of the sisters, who were thus unexpectedly restored to life and to each other. Their thanksgivings were deep and silent; the offerings of their gentle spirits, burning

6. Delawares: Mohicans.

7. Maquas: Hurons

8. Almighty Disposer: God

brightest and purest on the secret altars of their hearts; and their renovated and more earthly feelings exhibiting themselves in long and fervent, though speechless caresses. As Alice rose from her kness, where she had sunk by the side of Cora, she threw herself on the bosom of the latter, and sobbed aloud the name of their aged father, while her soft, dove-like eves sparkled with the rays of hope.

"We are saved! we are saved!" she murmured; "to return to the arms of our dear father, and his heart will not be broken with grief. And you too, Cora, my sister; my more than sister, my mother; you too are spared. And Duncan," she added, looking round upon the youth with a smile of ineffable innocence, "even our own brave and noble Duncan has escaped without a hurt."

To these ardent and nearly incoherent words Cora made no other answer than by straining the youthful speaker to her heart, as she bent over her, in melting tenderness. The manhood of Heyward felt no shame in dropping tears over this spectacle of affectionate rapture; and Uncas stood, fresh and blood-stained from the combat, a calm, and, apparently, an unmoved looker-on, it is true, but with a sympathy that elevated him far above the intelligence, and advanced him probably centuries before the practices of his nation.

During this display of emotions so natural in their situation. Hawkeye, whose vigilant distrust had satisfied itself that the Hurons, who disfigured the heavenly scene, no longer possessed the power to interrupt its harmony, approached David, and liberated him from the bonds he had, until that moment, endured with the most exemplary patience.

"There," exclaimed the scout, casting the last withe behind him, "you are once more master of your own limbs, though you seem not to use them with greater judgment than that in which they were first fashioned. If advice from one who is not older than yourself, but who having lived most of his time in the wilderness, may be said to have experience beyond his years, will give no offence, you are welcome to my thoughts; and these are, to part with the little tooting instrument in your jacket to the first fool you meet with, and buy some useful we'pon with the money, if it be only the barrel of a horseman's pistol. By industry and care, you might thus come to some preferment; for by this time, I should think, your eyes would plainly tell you that a carrion crow is a better bird than a mocking thresher. The one will, at least, remove foul sights from before the face of man, while the other is only good to brew disturbances in the woods, by cheating the ears of all that hear them."

"Arms and the clarion for the battle, but the song of thanksgiving to the victory!" answered the liberated David. "Friend," he added, thrusting forth his lean, delicate hand towards Hawkeye, in kindness, while his eyes twinkled and grew moist, "I thank thee the hairs of my head still grow where they were first rooted by Providence[9] for, though those of other men may be more glossy and curling, I have ever found mine own well suited to the brain they shelter. That I did not join myself to the battle, was less owing to disinclination, than to the bonds of the heathen. Valiant and skilful hast thou proved thyself in the conflict, and I hereby thank thee, before proceeding to discharge other and more important duties, because thou hast proved thyself well worthy of a Christian's praise."

9. Providence: God

SELECTION II

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

A. 1. How does Magua escape from Chingachgook?

2. What observation does Hawkeye make on the difference in defeat in battle between a Huron and a Mohican?

3. What advice does Hawkeye give to David?

4. How do you know that the Hurons did not use rope to tie their captives?

5. Do you think that it was unmanly for Heyward to cry? Explain your answer.

B. 1. What do you think of Cooper's style of writing?

2. In your opinion, are the events of the rescue believable? Explain your answer.

3. Is Hawkeye your idea of a hero? Explain.

4. In your opinion, who was the most courageous person during the rescue? Why do you think so?

5. What novels from your national literature are similar in theme to the Leatherstocking Tales?

OPTIONAL PROJECTS

FOR INTERPRETATION

1. The Romantic Movement in the United States emphasized emotion in literature and interest in the past and in the national scene. Cooper's romanticism is quite pronounced and in many ways is equivalent to that of the English writer, Sir Walter Scott. Can Chingachgook, Hawkeye, Uncas, Magua, Heyward be regarded as romantic figures? Explain your answers.

2. Compare the Romantic Movement in literature in your country with that of the United States. How were they similar? How different?

3. In narrating adventure, Cooper uses several techniques to develop suspense and to hold the reader's interest. What are these techniques? Give examples from the selection taken from *The Last Of The Mohicans*. In your opinion, which plays the largest part in Cooper's plots: mystery, romance, or adventure? Explain.

4. Cooper's major theme is that of the American frontier and his stories are based on history, are full of danger, narrow escapes, and brave deeds. What author in the literature of your country is similar to Cooper in theme? Write a short essay in which you compare the two authors in this respect. You may also want to compare them with regard to writing style, storytelling ability, characterization, ability to create suspense, and so forth.

FOR INVESTIGATION

**** Read two or three novels of the Deerslayer series. (You will find them listed in the introduction to the chapter.) Based on this reading, prepare a composition in which you characterize Deerslayer, keeping in mind that Cooper has stated that in Deerslayer he wished to portray "the highest principles of civilization as they are exhibited in the uneducated" and "all of savage life that is not incompatible with ... great rules of conduct." (You might like to expand the scope of your paper by comparing Deerslayer with a similar literary character in your own national literature.) Present your composition orally in class and then discuss your findings with your classmates.

CHAPTER IV

PHILIP FRENEAU

PHILIP FRENEAU (1752-1832)

It is not easy to conceive what will be the greatness and importance of North America in a century or two to come, if the present fabric of nature is upheld, and the people retain those bold and manly sentiments of freedom which actuate them at this day. Agriculture, the basis of a nation's greatness, will here, most probably, be advanced to its summit or perfection; and its attendant commerce, will so agreeably and usefully employ mankind, that wars will be forgotten; nations, by a free intercourse with this vast and fertile continent, and this continent with the whole world, will again become brothers after so many centuries of hatred and jealousy, and no longer treat each other as savages and monsters.

From *The Prose Of Philip Freneau*, selected and edited by Philip M. Marsh. The Scarecrow Press, New Brunswick, N.J., 1955

Philip Freneau was an ardent patriot who is still remembered as the "Poet of the American Revolution." While in college, he had already determined to become a poet. After his experience as a sailor in the Revolutionary War, he turned to newspaper and pamphlet writing. Today, however, Freneau is remembered more for his poetry than his prose. Two of his poems are reprinted below.

The first, "The Wild Honey Suckle" was virtually unread in the poet's lifetime, yet it deserves a place among major English and American works of poetry of that time. Much of the beauty of the poem lies in the sounds of the words and the effects created through changes in rhythm.

The idea for the second poem, "The Indian Burying Ground," was suggested by the fact that some Indian tribes buried their dead in a sitting, instead of a lying, position. This poem, too, is marked by a regularity of rhythm and meter and by the use of "Reason" as an abstraction which is personified.

Selection I

THE WILD HONEY SUCKLE

Fair flower, that does so comely grow,
Hid in this silent, dull retreat,
Untouched thy honied blossoms blow,
Unseen thy little branches greet;
  No roving foot shall crush thee here,
  No busy hand provoke a tear.

By Nature's self in white arrayed,
She bade thee shun the vulgar eye,
And planted here the guardian shade,
And sent soft waters murmuring by;
  Thus quietly thy summer goes,
  Thy days declining to repose.

Smit with those charms, that must decay,
I grieve to see your future doom;
They died—nor were those flowers more gay,
The flowers that did in Eden[1] bloom;
  Unpitying frosts, and Autumns' power
  Shall leave no vestige of this flower.

From morning suns and evening dews
At first thy little being came:
If nothing once, you nothing lose,
For when you die you are the same;
  The space between, is but an hour,
  The frail duration of a flower.

1. Eden: garden that was the home of the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, as told in the Book of Genesis of the English Bible.

Selection II

THE INDIAN BURYING GROUND

Published in 1788, this poem is the earliest to romanticize the Indian as a child of nature.

In spite of all the learned have said,
  I still my old opinion keep;
The posture, that we give the dead,
  Points out the soul's eternal sleep.

Not so the ancients of these lands—
  The Indian, when from life released,
Again is seated with his friends,
  And shares again the joyous feast.

His imaged birds, and painted bowl,
And venison, for a journey dressed,
Bespeak the nature of the soul,
Activity, that knows no rest.

His bow, for action ready bent,
And arrows, with a head of stone,
Can only mean that life is spent,
And not the old ideas gone.

Thou, stranger, that shalt come this way,
No fraud upon the dead commit—
Observe the swelling turf, and say
They do not lie, but here they sit.

Here still a lofty rock remains,
On which the curious eye may trace
(Now wasted, half, by wearing rains)
The fancies of a ruder race.

Here still an aged elm aspires,
Beneath whose far-projecting shade
(And which the shepherd still admires)
The children of the forest played!

There oft a restless Indian queen
(Pale Shebah,[2] with her braided hair)
And many a barbarous form is seen
To chide the man that lingers there.

By midnight moons, o'er moistening dews;
In habit for the chase arrayed,
The hunter still the deer pursues,
The hunter and the deer, a shade!

And long shall timorous fancy see
The painted chief, and pointed spear,
And Reason's self shall bow the knee
To shadows and delusions here.

1. feast — "The North American Indians bury their dead in a sitting posture decorating the corpse with wampum, the images of birds, quadrapeds, etc., and (if that of a warrior) with bows, arrows, tomahawks, and other military weapons." (Freneau's note)
2. Shebah — queen of an ancient country in southern Arabia.

SELECTIONS I and II

DUSCUSSION QUESTIONS

The Wild Honey Suckle

1. Freneau was extremely sensitive to the beauties of nature. In this poem he expresses a keen awareness of the loveliness and transience of nature. What impression of the flower is given in the first two stanzas, particularly through the personification of nature?

2. Why does the poet feel grief about the flower's doom? To what does he compare its charms?

3. What conclusion does the poet draw in the last stanza?

4. Do you think Freneau is comparing the life of a flower with the life of man? Explain your reasoning. What meaning is suggested by the phrase "but an hour"?

The Indian Burying Ground

1. Do you agree with Freneau that the position in which the dead are placed "points out the soul's eternal sleep"?

2. Some aspects of Indian culture are treated in the poem. What are they?

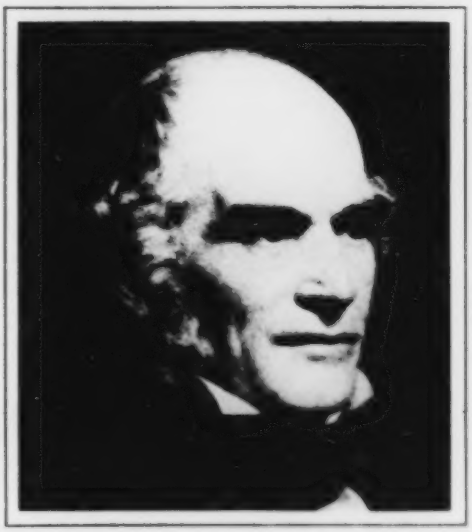
3. What do you think the "fancies of a ruder race" are as mentioned in the sixth stanza?

4. According to Freneau, in what way does fancy conquer reason?

5. In your own words, summarize what you think the poet is saying in this poem.

CHAPTER V

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT



WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT (1794-1878)

I infer, then that all the materials of poetry exist in our own country, with all the ordinary encouragements and opportunities for making a successful use of them. The elements of beauty and grandeur, intellectual greatness and moral truth, the stormy and the gentle passions, the casualities and the changes of life, and the light shed upon man's nature by the story of past times and the knowledge of foreign manners, have not made their sole abode in the old world beyond the waters. If under these circumstances our poetry should finally fail of rivalling that of Europe, it will be because Genius sits idle in the midst of treasures.

From "On Poetry in its Relation to Our Age and Country," cited in Albert D. Van Nostrand and Charles H. Watts II, eds., *The Conscious Voice: An Anthology of American Poetry from the Seventeenth Century to the Present*. The Liberal Arts Press: New York, 1959.

Bryant (1794-1878) was the first American lyric poet of distinction. He could make his poems sing melodies that might be stately, as they are in "Thanatopsis;" gentle, as in "To a Waterfowl;" or stirring, as in "Song of Marion's Men;" but always graceful and never cloying.

SELECTION I

"Thanatopsis," Bryant's best-known poem, was in large part written in 1811 when the poet was only sixteen years old. Six years later, without Bryant's knowledge, his father sent the poem and other pieces to the famous magazine, *North American Review*. The story goes that Richard Henry Dana, later one of Bryant's closets friends, remarked on seeing the manuscript that no one in America was capable of writing such verses. Thinking that another poem on death, consisting of four stanzas in iambic tetrameter a-b-a-b, was part of "Thanatopsis," the editors of the *North American Review* published both under one title in the issue of September 1817. When Bryant prepared his volume, *Poems* (1821), he added lines 1-17 as an introduction and sixteen lines at the end beginning with "As the long train. . ."

The poem, the title of which means "view of death," should be read in the light of both literary tradition and Bryant's own religious background. From the English poets (notably Henry Kirke White, Robert Blair, Robert Southey, and William Cowper) he learned of the possibilities of blank verse and the themes of the "graveyard school" of writers. Even if he had not read these poets, however, Bryant could not have had, from his Puritan background, a liking for the funeral. Note that this concept of Man's long sleep is more Stoic than Christian with no hint of the resurrection or immortality of the soul.

THANATOPSIS

To him who in the love of Nature holds
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks
A various language; for his gayer hours
She has a voice of gladness, and a smile
And eloquence of beauty, and she glides
Into his darker musings, with a mild
And healing sympathy, that steals away
Their sharpness ere he is aware. When thoughts
Of the last bitter hour come like a blight
Over thy spirit, and sad images
Of the stern agony, and shroud, and pall,
And breathless darkness, and the narrow coffin house,

Make thee to shudder, and grow sick at heart;—
Go forth, under the open sky, and list
To Nature's teachings, while from all around—
Earth and her waters, and the depths of air—
Comes a still voice—Yet a few days, and thee
The all-beholding sun shall see no more
In all his course; nor yet in the cold ground,
Where thy pale form was laid, with many tears,
Nor in the embrace of ocean, shall exist
Thy image. Earth, that nourished thee, shall claim
Thy growth, to be resolved to earth again,
And, lost each human trace, surrendering up
Thine individual being, shalt thou go
To mix for ever with the elements,
To be a brother to the insensible rock
And to the sluggish clod, which the rude swain
Turns with his share, and treads upon. The oak
Shall send his roots abroad, and pierce thy mould.

Yet not to thine eternal resting-place
Shalt thou retire alone, nor couldst thou wish
Couch more magnificent. Thou shalt lie down
With patriarchs of the infant world—with kings,
The powerful of the earth—the wise, the good,
Fair forms, and hoary seers of ages past,
All in one mighty sepulchre. The hills

Rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun,—the vales
Stretching in pensive quietness between;
The venerable woods,—rivers that move
In majesty, and the complaining brooks
That make the meadows green; and, poured round all,

Old Ocean's gray and melancholy waste,—
Are but the solemn decorations all
Of the great tomb of man. The golden sun,
The planets, all the infinite host of heaven,
Are shining on the sad abodes of death,
Through the still lapse of ages. All that tread
The globe are but a handful to the tribes
That slumber in its bosom.—Take the wings
Of morning, pierce the Barcan wilderness,
Or lose thyself in the continuous woods
Where rolls the Oregon, and hears no sound,
Save his own dashings—yet the dead are there:
And millions in those solitudes, since first
The flight of years began, have laid them down
In their last sleep—the dead reign there alone.
So shalt thou rest, and what if thou withdraw
In silence from the living, and no friend
Take note of thy departure? All that breathe
Will share thy destiny. The gay will laugh
When thou art gone, the solemn brood of care
Plod on, and each one as before will chase
His favorite phantom; yet all these shall leave
Their mirth and their employments, and shall come
And make their bed with thee. As the long train
Of ages glide away, the sons of men,
The youth in life's green spring, and he who goes
In the full strength of years, matron, and maid,
And speechless babe, and the gray-headed man—
Shall one by one be gathered to thy side,
By those, who in their turn shall follow them.

So live, that when thy summons comes to join
The innumerable caravan, which moves
To that mysterious realm, where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night,
Scourged to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave

Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

Notes:

29. share — plowshare.
51. Barcan-Barca refers to the desert region of North Africa, and is so used by the Latin poets; Bryant is here transferring its meaning and has in mind the "Great American Desert" which formerly occupied a large space on maps of the U.S.
53. Oregon-the Columbia River. Lewis and Clark reached the mouth of the Columbia Nov. 7, 1805.
55. millions-the notion of America as having been peopled by a vanished race, a favorite concept of Bryant's, was part of the romantic anthropology of the day and found support in the theory that the Mound Builders were a people of high culture. See "The Prairies" of Bryant.
68. green-"fresh" in some editions.

SELECTION II

This poem, called by Matthew Arnold "The most perfect brief poem in the language," was composed by Bryant after a walk from Cummington to Plainfield, Massachusetts, in December 1815. Arranged in alternating rhymed quatrains, it expressed both the poet's grateful view, at the close of a day of self-doubt and despair, of a solitary bird on the horizon, and his sense of a divine power guiding and protecting everything in nature. The clarity of the central image and the aptness and simplicity of the moral analogy have always been admired, even by those who dislike "preaching" in poetry. The effect of the stanza form has been described as "gliding," appropriate to the visual image of the second stanza. The poem was first published in the *NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW* for March 1818 and collected in the *POEMS OF 1821*.

TO A WATERFOWL

Whither, midst falling dew,
While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,
Far, through their rosy depths, dost thou pursue
Thy solitary way?

Vainly the fowler's[1] eye
Might mark thy distant flight to do thee wrong,
As darkly seen against the crimson sky,
Thy figure floats along.

Seek'st thou the plashy[2] brink
Of weedy lake, or marge of river wide,
Or where the rocking billows rise and sink
On the chafed ocean-side?

There is a Power whose care
Teaches thy way along that pathless coast—
The desert and illimitable air—
Lone wandering, but not lost.

All day thy wings have fanned,
At that far height, the cold, thin atmosphere,
Yet stoop not, weary, to the welcome land,
Though the dark night is near.

And soon that toil shall end;
Soon shalt thou find a summer home, and rest,
And scream among thy fellows; reeds shall bend,
Soon, o'er thy sheltered nest.

Thou'rt gone, the abyss of heaven
Hath swallowed up thy form; yet, on my heart
Deeply has sunk the lesson thou hast given,
And shall not soon depart.

He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright.

---

1. fowler's — hunter's
2. plashy — marshy, swampy

SELECTIONS I and II

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Thanatopsis

A. 1. Does this poem in any way reveal that it is the work of a teenage youth? Explain your answer.

2. According to the opening lines, what different messages does nature give us?

3. Contrast the two views of death in lines 17-30 and 31-72. What consolation is there in the two facts presented in lines 31-33?

4. Explain what Bryant means when he says that the earth is the "great tomb of man"? What are its "decorations"? Why should acceptance of death be a natural thing?

5. According to the poet, in what spirit should one approach death?

To A Waterfowl

1. Cite those stanzas that make up each of the three parts of the poem: the picture seen by the poet, his meditation about the bird, and his application of these thoughts to his own life.

2. What faith does the last stanza express?

B. 1. What poems about death do you know in your own language? How do they compare with Bryant's treatment of the subject?

2. Do you agree with Bryant's attitude towards death? Explain your answer.

3. Do you find inspiration in the message of the waterfowl in the same manner that Bryant did? Explain.

4. In your opinion, do young people in your country think a lot about death? Do you think this is a characteristic common to youth in most parts of the world? Give your reasons.

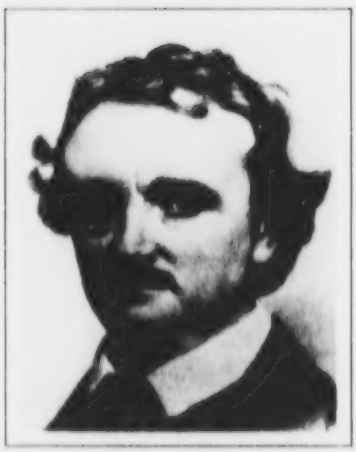
FOR INTERPRETATION (Optional)

1. In a composition of about 250-300 words, compare Bryant's concept of a mystical union between man and nature with the mystical movements among the youth of your country today.

2. The emphasis in Bryant's poetry was upon nature as a source of solace, joy, and escape. Do you think that modern man regards nature in this fashion? Explain your answer.

CHAPTER VI

EDGAR ALLAN POE



EDGAR ALLAN POE (1809-1849)

There is a radical error, I think, in the usual mode of constructing a story. Either history affords a thesis—or one is suggested by an incident of the day—or, at best, the author sets himself to work in the combination of striking events to form merely the basis of his narrative—designing, generally, to fill in with description, dialogue, or authorial comment, whatever crevices of fact, or action, may, from page to page, render themselves apparent. I prefer commencing with the consideration of an effect. Keeping originality *always* in view—for he is false to himself who ventures to dispense with so obvious and so readily attainable a source of interest—I say to myself, in the first place, "Of the innumerable effects, or impressions, of which the heart, the intellect, or (more generally) the soul is susceptible, what one shall I, on the present occasion, select?" Having chosen a novel, first, and secondly, a vivid effect, I consider whether by ordinary incidents and peculiar tone, or the converse, or by peculiarity both of incident and tone—afterward looking about me (or rather within) for such combinations of event, or tone, as shall best aid me in the construction of the effect.

From "The Philosophy of Composition," *Poetry And Prose*, Houghton Mifflin

The brilliance of Poe (1809-1849) can be seen in the selections given here. The poems are as melodious as Bryant's but more dramatic in their effects. "Israfel" is Poe's poetic apology for himself, while "Annabel Lee" mourns the death of a beautiful girl, a recurring subject in Poe's writing.

One of the most remarkable things about the pair of poems reprinted below is their melody. The are singable, not as a popular or concert song is, but with a wild kind of word music. As you read these lines, aloud or to yourself, you will probably be able to understand why Poe was considered so skillful a poet. The rhythms of "Israfel" are rapid; the lines move fast. The beat is strong and skillfully varied. The vowel sounds are higher than in ordinary writing, helping to make the voice that reads them sound like a musical instrument such as the harp.

It is worth noting that the selections of Poe's work which follow have nothing to do with America. Unlike those of some of his contemporaries, Poe's subjects and themes were either universal or exotic. He had little interest in the topical or everyday occurrences, seeking instead to avoid factuality or logical clarity that would make a poem understandable to the common intellect. For the most part, Poe's poems do not truly illuminate; they are not expected to have plot. He continually emphasized estrangement, disappearance, silence, oblivion, and all ideas which suggest nonbeing. It was the idea of approximating nothingness that most excited him in his own poetry and that of other poets.

SELECTION I

In the motto, taken from the *Koran*, Poe took a few liberties with the description of Israfel by

adding the words, "whose heart strings are a lute." The words were probably suggested by a passage in a poem, "Le Refus" by the French poet, Beranger (1780-1857). The song embodies Poe's wish for a beauty superior to that of earth, more approaching the divine. The final stanzas voice the poet's despair at the restrictions of his environment. The poem first appeared in Poe's *Poems* (1831) and was carried several times in later editions.

ISRAFEL

"And the angel Israfel, whose heart-strings are a lute, and who has the sweetest voice of all God's creatures,"—Koran[1]

In Heaven a spirit doth dwell
  "Whose heart-strings are a lute";
None sing so wildly well
As the angel Israfel,
And the giddy stars (so legends tell),
Ceasing their hymns,[2] attend the spell
  Of his voice, all mute.

Tottering above
  In her highest noon,[3]
  The enamored moon
Blushes with love,

  While, to listen, the red levin[4]
  (With the rapid Pleiads,[5] even,
  Which were seven,)
  Pauses in Heaven.

And they say (the starry choir
  And the other listening things)
That Israfeli's fire
Is owing to that lyre
  By which he sits and sings—
The trembling living wire
  Of those unusual strings.

But the skies that angel trod,
  Where deep thoughts are a duty,
Where Love's a grown-up God,
  Where the Houri[6] glances are
Imbued with all the beauty
  Which we worship in a star.

Therefore, thou art not wrong,
  Israfel, who despisest
An unimpassioned song;
To thee the laurels belong,
  Best bard, because the wisest!
Merrily live, and long!

The ecstasies above
  With thy burning measures suit—
Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love,
  With the fervor of thy lute—
  Well may the stars be mute!

Yes, Heaven is thine; but this
  Is a world of sweets and sours;
  Our flowers are merely—flowers,
And the shadow of thy perfect bliss
  Is the sunshine of ours.

If I could dwell
Where Israfel
  Hath dwelt, and he where I,
He might not sing so wildly well
  A mortal melody,
While a bolder note than this might swell
From my lyre within the sky.

1. Koran—the sacred book of Mohammedans.
2. "And the giddy stars. . .ceasing their hymns."—It was an ancient belief that the stars gave forth heavenly music as they moved in their courses.
3. "her highest noon"—position in which the moon is highest in the sky.
4. levin—lightning.
5. Pleiads. . .seven—According to Greek mythology these stars were once the seven daughters of Atlas, the giant who supported the world on his shoulders.
6. Houri, a beautiful spirit of the Mohammedan paradise.

SELECTION II

This poem, which was the last one Poe wrote, is believed by many critics to be an idealization of his wife, Virginia Clemm, who died in 1847. It was published posthumously in the New York *Tribune* of October 9, 1849. In six stanzas of alternating four and three stress lines, the poem has been called "the culmination of Poe's lyric style in his recurrent theme of the loss of a beautiful and loved woman." Note especially the incantatory use of repetition not only in words and lines but also in sustained recapitulation as in lines 21–26.

ANNABEL LEE

It was many and many a year ago,
  In a kingdom by the sea,
That a maiden there lived whom you may know
  By the name of Annabel Lee;—
And this maiden she lived with no other thought
  Than to love and be loved by me.

She was a child and *I* was a child,
  In this kingdom by the sea,
But we loved with a love that was more than love—
  I and my Annabel Lee—
With a love that the winged seraphs of Heaven
  Coveted her and me.

And this was the reason that, long ago,
  In this kingdom by the sea,
A wind blew out of a cloud by night
  Chilling my Annabel Lee;
So that her highborn kinsmen came
  And bore her away from me,
To shut her up in a sepulchre
  In this kingdom by the sea.

The angels, not half so happy in Heaven,
  Went envying her and me:—
Yes! that was the reason (as all men know,
  In this kingdom by the sea)
That the wind came out of the cloud, chilling
  And killing my Annabel Lee.
But our love it was stronger by far than the love
  Of those who were older than we—
  Of many far wiser than we—

And neither the angels in Heaven above
  Nor the demons down under the sea,
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul
  Of the beautiful Annabel Lee:—

For the moon never beams without bringing me dreams
  Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;

And the stars never rise but I see the bright eyes
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;
And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side
Of my darling, my darling, my life and my bride,
In her sepulchre there by the sea—
In her tomb by the side of the sea.

SELECTIONS I and II

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Israfel

1. From his description of Israfel's song, what poetic techniques do you think Poe most admires? Find passages showing these techniques.
2. Explain the last stanza of "Israfel."

Annabel Lee

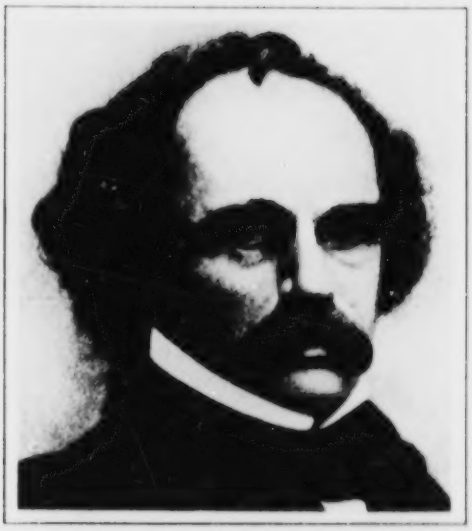
1. Cite lines which support the idea that the poem is an idealized account of Poe's dead wife, Virginia Clemm.
2. How does the poem illustrate the timelessness of love? How do you interpret the last four lines of the last stanza?
3. Who do you think her "highborn kinsmen" are? (line 17)
4. What qualities of "Annabel Lee" remind you of a ballad? Select words and phrases that give the poem its unreal atmosphere.

FOR INTERPRETATION (OPTIONAL)

1. What is the mood of "Israfel?" of "Annabel Lee?"
2. Do you think that Poe's poetry is too emotional? Explain your answer.
3. What is your opinion of Poe as a poet?
4. Has the poetry of Poe had much influence on this genre in your country? If so, in what way?
5. Poe made good use of a number of poetic devices to create a mood appropriate to the theme of his poems. The result is often a poem of almost haunting melody done with extreme artistry. Make a list of examples of the following poetic devices in the two poems: "Annabel Lee," "Israfel": rhyme (end and internal), alliteration, assonance, and repetition.

CHAPTER VII

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE



NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE (1804-1864)

What is Guilt? A stain upon the soul. And it is a point of vast interest whether the soul may contract such stains, in all their depth and flagrancy, from deeds which may have been plotted and resolved upon, but which, physically, have never had existence. Must the fleshy hand and visible frame of man set its seal to the evil designs of the soul, in order to give them their entire validity against the sinner? Or, while none but crimes perpetrated are cognizable before an earthly tribunal, will guilty thoughts—of which guilty deeds are no more than shadows—will these draw down the full weight of a condemning sentence, in the supreme court of eternity? In the solitude of a midnight chamber or in a desert, afar from men or in a church, while the body is kneeling, the soul may pollute itself even with those crimes which we are accustomed to deem altogether carnal. If this be true, it is a fearful truth.

From "Fancy's Show Box" in Hyatt H. Wassoner, *Nathaniel Hawthorne, Selected Tales And Sketches*, New York, Toronto: Rinehart & Co., Inc., 1954 (Copyright 1950).

Hawthorne was imbued with an inquiring imagination, an intensely meditative mind, and an unceasing interest in the ambiguity of man's being. He was an anatomist of "the interior of the heart," conscious of the loneliness of man in the universe, of the darkness that enshrouds all joy, and of the need of man to look into his own soul.

In both his novels and his short stories, Hawthorne wrote essentially as a moralist. He was interested in what happened in the minds and hearts of men and women when they knew they had done wrong. He focused his examination on the moral and psychological consequences that manifested themselves in human beings as a result of their vanity, their hatred, their egotism, their ambition, and their pride. He was intrigued by the way they felt and the way they acted when they knew they had done wrong.

In "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment," Hawthorne illustrates several sides of his writing: his disenchanted view of human nature, his use of symbolism, and his interest in the supernatural. In addition, the story treats one of the new nineteenth century ideas that concerned Hawthorne: scientific experiment. The story itself is a stimulating and rewarding study of right and wrong in human conduct.

SELECTION I

"Dr. Heidegger's Experiment," which first appeared in the author's *Twice-Told Tales* in 1837, asks the question so many of us ask ourselves: "If I had my life to live over, what changes would I make?". In "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment," Hawthorne builds a fantasy around the idea of the Fountain of Youth and

provides the reader with logical but surprising answers.

In that part of the story which precedes the excerpt reprinted below, Hawthorne has described the doctor, his four elderly guests, and his weird-looking study.

From Dr. Heidegger's Experiment

Such was Dr. Heidegger's study. On the summer afternoon of our tale a small round table, as black as ebony, stood in the centre of the room, sustaining a cut-glass vase of beautiful form and elaborate workmanship. The sunshine came through the window, between the heavy festoons of two faded damask curtains, and fell directly across this vase; so that a mild splendor was reflected from it on the ashen visages of the five old people who sat around. Four champagne glasses were also on the table.

"My dear old friends," repeated Dr. Heidegger, "may I reckon on your aid in performing an exceedingly curious experiment?"

Now Dr. Heidegger was a very strange old gentleman, whose eccentricity had become the nucleus for a thousand fantastic stories. Some of these fables, to my shame be it spoken, might possibly be traced back to my own veracious self; and if any passages of the present tale should startle the reader's faith, I must be content to bear the stigma of a fiction monger.

When the doctor's four guests heard him talk of his proposed experiment, they anticipated nothing more wonderful than the murder of a mouse in an air pump, or the examination of a cobweb by the microscope, or some similar nonsense, with which he was constantly in the habit of pestering his intimates. But without waiting for a reply Dr. Heidegger hobbled across the chamber, and returned with the same ponderous folio, bound in black leather, which common report affirmed to be a book of magic. Undoing the silver clasps, he opened the volume, and took from among its black-letter pages a rose, or what was once a rose, though now the green leaves and crimson petals had assumed one brownish hue, and the ancient flower seemed ready to crumble to dust in the doctor's hands.

"This rose," said Dr. Heidegger, with a sigh, "this same withered and crumbling flower, blossomed five and fifty years ago. It was given me by Sylvia Ward, whose portrait hangs yonder; and I meant to wear it in my bosom at our wedding. Five and fifty years it has been treasured between the leaves of this old volume. Now, would you deem it possible that this rose of half a century could ever bloom again?"

"Nonsense!" said the Widow Wycherly, with a peevish toss of her head. "You might as well ask whether an old woman's wrinkled face could ever bloom again."

"See!" answered Dr. Heidegger.

He uncovered the vase, and threw the faded rose into the water which it contained. At first, it lay lightly on the surface of the fluid, appearing to imbibe none of its moisture. Soon, however, a singular change began to be visible. The crushed and dried petals stirred, and assumed a deepening tinge of crimson, as if the flower were reviving from a death-like slumber; the slender stalk and twigs of foliage became green; and there was the rose of half a century, looking as fresh as when Sylvia Ward had first given it to her lover. It was scarcely full blown; for some of its delicate red leaves curled modestly around its moist bosom, within which two or three dewdrops were sparkling.

"That is certainly a very pretty deception," said the doctor's friends; carelessly, however, for they had witnessed greater

miracles at a conjurer's show; "pray how was it effected?"

"Did you never hear of the 'Fountain of Youth'?" asked Dr. Heidegger, "which Ponce De Leon, the Spanish adventurer, went in search of two or three centuries ago?"

"But did Ponce De Leon ever find it?" said the Widow Wycherly.

"No," answered Dr. Heidegger, "for he never sought it in the right place. The famous Fountain of Youth, if I am rightly informed, is situated in the southern part of the Floridian peninsula, not far from Lake Macaco. Its source is overshadowed by several gigantic magnolias, which, though numberless centuries old, have been kept as fresh as violets by the virtues of this wonderful water. An acquaintance of mine, knowing my curiosity in such matters, has sent me what you see in the vase."

"Ahem!" said Colonel Killigrew, who believed not a word of the doctor's story; "and what may be the effect of this fluid on the human frame?"

"You shall judge for yourself, my dear colonel," replied Dr. Heidegger; "and all of you, my respected friends, are welcome to so much of this admirable fluid as may restore to you the bloom of youth. For my own part, having had much trouble in growing old, I am in no hurry to grow young again. With your permission, therefore, I will merely watch the progress of the experiment."

While he spoke, Dr. Heidegger had been filling the four champagne glasses with the water of the Fountain of Youth. It was apparently impregnated with an effervescent gas, for little bubbles were continually ascending from the depths of the glasses, and bursting in silvery spray at the surface. As the liquor diffused a pleasant perfume, the old people doubted not that it possessed cordial and comfortable properties; and though utter sceptics as to its rejuvenescent power, they were inclined to swallow it at once. But Dr. Heidegger besought them to stay a moment.

"Before you drink, my respectable old friends," said he, "it would be well that, with the experience of a lifetime to direct you, you should draw up a few general rules for your guidance, in passing a second time through the perils of youth. Think what a sin and shame it would be, if, with your peculiar advantages, you should not become patterns of virtue and wisdom to all the young people of the age!"

The doctor's four venerable friends made him no answer, except by a feeble and tremulous laugh; so very ridiculous was the idea that, knowing how closely repentance treads behind the steps of error, they should ever go astray again.

"Drink, then," said the doctor, bowing; "I rejoice that I have so well selected the subjects of my experiment."

With palsied hands, they raised the glasses to their lips. The liquor, if it really possessed such virtues as Dr. Heidegger imputed to it, could not have been bestowed on four human beings who needed it more woefully. They looked as if they had never known what youth or pleasure was, but had been the offspring of nature's dotage, and always the gray, decrepit, sapless, miserable creatures, who now sat stooping round the doctor's table, without life enough in their souls or bodies to be animated even by the prospect of growing young again. They drank off the water, and replaced their glasses on the table.

Assuredly there was an almost immediate improvement in the aspect of the party, not unlike what might have been produced by a glass of generous wine, together with a sudden glow of cheerful sun-

shine brightening over all their visages at once. There was a healthful suffusion on their cheeks, instead of the ashen hue that had made them look so corpselike. They gazed at one another, and fancied that some magic power had really begun to smooth away the deep and sad inscriptions which Father Time had been so long engraving on their brows. The Widow Wycherly adjusted her cap, for she felt almost like a woman again.

"Give us more of this wondrous water!" cried they, eagerly. "We are younger—but we are still too old! Quick—give us more!"

"Patience, patience!" quoth Dr. Heidegger, who sat watching the experiment with philosophic coolness. "You have been a long time growing old. Surely, you might be content to grow young in half an hour! But the water is at your service."

Again he filled their glasses with the liquor of youth, enough of which still remained in the vase to turn half the old people in the city to the age of their own grandchildren. While the bubbles were yet sparkling on the brim, the doctor's four guests snatched their glasses from the table, and swallowed the contents at a single gulp. Was it delusion? Even while the draught was passing down their throats, it seemed to have wrought a change on their whole systems. Their eyes grew clear and bright; a dark shade deepened among their silvery locks, they sat around the table, three gentlemen of middle age, and a woman, hardly beyond her buxom prime.

"My dear widow, you are charming!" cried Colonel Killigrew, whose eyes had been fixed upon her face, while the shadows of age were flitting from it like darkness from the crimson daybreak.

Their fair widow knew, of old, that Colonel Killigrew's compliments were not always measured by sober truth; so she started up and ran to the mirror, still dreading that the ugly visage of an old woman would meet her gaze. Meanwhile, the three gentlemen behaved in such a manner as proved that the water of the Fountain of Youth possessed some intoxicating qualities; unless, indeed, their exhilaration of spirits were merely a lightsome dizziness caused by the sudden removal of the weight of years. Mr. Gascoigne's mind seemed to run on political topics, but whether relating to the past, present, or future, could not easily be determined, since the same ideas and phrases have been in vogue these fifty years. Now he rattled forth full-throated sentences about patriotism, national glory, and the people's right; now he muttered some perilous stuff or other, in a sly and doubtful whisper, so cautiously that even his own conscience could scarcely catch the secret; and now, again, he spoke in measured accents, and a deeply deferential tone, as if a royal ear were listening to his well-turned periods. Colonel Killigrew all this time had been trolling forth a jolly battle song, and ringing his glass in symphony with the chorus, while his eyes wandered toward the buxom figure of the Widow Wycherly. On the other side of the table, Mr. Medbourne was involved in a calculation of dollars and cents, with which was strangely intermingled a project for supplying the East Indies with ice, by harnessing a team of whales to the polar icebergs.

SELECTION I

Dr. Heidegger's Experiment

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What importance does a rose play in the story?
2. Who was Sylvia Ward?
3. Where did Dr. Heidegger get the water in the vase?
4. Describe the "magic" water.
5. Why doesn't Dr. Heidegger want to be young again?
6. How did the guests react to Dr. Heidegger's suggestion that they draw up a few general rules for their guidance?

SELECTION II

The remainder of Hawthorne's story is reprinted here.

From Dr. Heidegger's Experiment

concluded

As for the Widow Wycherly, she stood before the mirror courtesying and simpering to her own image, and greeting it as the friend whom she loved better than all the world beside. She thrust her face close to the glass, to see whether some long-remembered wrinkle or crow's foot had indeed vanished. She examined whether the snow had so entirely melted from her hair that the venerable cap could be safely thrown aside. At last, turning briskly away, she came with a sort of dancing step to the table.

"My dear old doctor," cried she, "pray favor me with another glass!"

"Certainly, my dear madam, certainly!" replied the complaisant doctor; "see! I have already filled the glasses."

There, in fact, stood the four glasses, brimful of this wonderful water, the delicate spray of which, as it effervesced from the surface, resembled the tremulous glitter of diamonds. It was now so nearly sunset that the chamber had grown duskier than ever; but a mild and moonlike splendor gleamed from within the vase, and rested alike on the four guests and on the doctor's venerable figure. He sat in a high-backed, elaborately-carved, oaken arm-chair, with a gray dignity of aspect that might have well befitted that very Father Time, whose power had never been disputed, save by this fortunate company. Even while quaffing the third draught of the Fountain of Youth, they were almost awed by the expression of his mysterious visage.

But, the next moment, the exhilarating gush of young life shot through their veins. They were now in a happy prime of youth. Age, with its miserable train of cares and sorrows and diseases, was remembered only as the trouble of a dream, from which they had jovously awoke. The fresh gloss of the soul, so early lost, and without which the world's successive scenes had been but a gallery of faded pictures, again threw its enchantment over all their prospects. They felt like new-created beings in a new-created universe.

"We are young! We are young!" they cried exultingly.

Youth, like the extremity of age, had effaced the strongly-marked characteristics of middle life, and mutually assimilated them all. They were a group of merry youngsters, almost maddened with the ex-

uberant frolicsomeness of their years. The most singular effect of their gayety was an impulse to mock the infirmity and decrepitude of which they had so lately been the victims. They laughed loudly at their old-fashioned attire, the wide-skirted coats and flapped waistcoats of the young men, and the ancient cap and gown of the blooming girl. One limped across the floor like a gouty grandfather; one set a pair of spectacles astride of his nose, and pretended to pore over the black-letter pages of the book of magic; a third seated himself in an arm-chair, and strove to imitate the venerable dignity of Dr. Heidegger. Then all shouted mirthfully, and leaped about the room. The Widow Wycherly—if so fresh a damsel could be called a widow—tripped up to the doctor's chair, with a mischievous merriment in her rosy face.

"Doctor, you dear old soul," cried she, "get up and dance with me!" And then the four young people laughed louder than ever, to think what a queer figure the poor old doctor would cut.

"Pray excuse me," answered the doctor quietly. "I am old and rheumatic, and my dancing days were over long ago. But either of these gay young gentlemen will be glad of so pretty a partner."

"Dance with me, Clara!" cried Colonel Killigrew.

"No, no, I will be her partner!" shouted Mr. Gascoigne.

"She promised me her hand, fifty years ago!" exclaimed Mr. Medbourne.

They all gathered round her. One caught both her hands in his passionate grasp—another threw his arm about her waist—the third buried his hand among the glossy curls that clustered beneath the widow's cap. Blushing, panting, struggling, chiding, laughing, her warm breath fanning each of their faces by turns, she strove to disengage herself, yet still remained in their triple embrace. Never was there a livelier picture of youthful rivalship, with bewitching beauty for the prize. Yet, by a strange deception, owing to the duskiness of the chamber, and the antique dresses which they still wore, the tall mirror is said to have reflected the figures of the three old, gray, withered grandsires, ridiculously contending for the skinny ugliness of a shrivelled grandam.

But they were young: their burning passions proved them so. Inflamed to madness by the coquetry of the girl-widow, who neither granted nor quite withheld her favors, the three rivals began to interchange threatening glances. Still keeping hold of the fair prize, they grappled fiercely at one another's throats. As they struggled to and fro, the table was overturned, and the vase dashed into a thousand fragments. The precious Water of Youth flowed in a bright stream across the floor, moistening the wings of a butterfly, which, grown old in the decline of summer, had alighted there to die. The insect fluttered lightly through the chamber, and settled on the snowy head of Dr. Heidegger.

"Come, come, gentlemen!—come, Madam Wycherly," exclaimed the doctor, "I really must protest against this riot."

They stood still and shivered; for it seemed as if gray Time were calling them back from their sunny youth, far down into the chill and darksome vale of years. They looked at old Dr. Heidegger, who sat in his carved arm-chair, holding the rose of half a century, which he had rescued from among the fragments of the shattered vase. At the motion of his hand, the four rioters resumed their seats; the more readily, because their violent exertions had wearied them, youthful though they were.

"My poor Sylvia's rose!" ejaculated Dr. Heidegger, holding it in the light of the

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sunset clouds; "it appears to be fading again."

And so it was. Even while the party were looking at it, the flower continued to shrivel up, till it became as dry and fragile as when the doctor had first thrown it into the vase. He shook off the few drops of moisture which clung to its petals.

"I love it as well thus as in its dewy freshness," observed he, pressing the withered rose to his withered lips. While he spoke, the butterfly fluttered down from the doctor's snowy head, and fell upon the floor.

His guests shivered again. A strange chillness, whether of the body or spirit they could not tell, was creeping gradually over them all. They gazed at one another, and fancied that each fleeting moment snatched away a charm, and left a deepening furrow where none had been before. Was it an illusion? Had the changes of a lifetime been crowded into so brief a space, and were they now four aged people, sitting with their old friend, Dr. Heidegger?

"Are we grown old again, so soon?" cried they, dolefully.

In truth they had. The Water of Youth possessed merely a virtue more transient than that of wine. The delirium which it created had effervesced away. Yes! they were old again. With a shuddering impulse, that showed her a woman still, the widow clasped her skinny hands before her face, and wished that the coffin lid were over it, since it could be no longer beautiful.

"Yes, friends, ve are old again," said Dr. Heidegger, "and lo! the Water of Youth is all lavished on the ground. Well—I bemoan it not; for if the fountain gushed at my very doorstep, I would not stoop to bathe my lips in it—no, though its delirium were for years instead of moments. Such is the lesson ve have taught me!"

But the doctor's four friends had taught no such lesson to themselves. They resolved forthwith to make a pilgrimage to Florida, and quaff at morning, noon, and night, from the Fountain of Youth.

SELECTION II

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Dr. Heidegger's Experiment

A. 1. Why did the characters have to be the kind one could not admire?

2. Did their actions after drinking the magic liquid impress you as funny or sad? Explain the reason for your answer.

3. What is Hawthorne's answer to the question on which the story hinges. Would we live our lives differently if we could live them over? Do you agree with his conclusion? What value is there in speculating on a situation that could not happen in actual life?

4. What is the function of the mirror in the story? Do you feel that this manipulation adds to or detracts from the effectiveness of the story as a whole?

5. Which elements in the story are romantic? Which are realistic?

6. Was it good to have a ratio of three men to one woman? Why not two men and two women? Why do you think Hawthorne chose a woman who in her youth had been courted by the men?

B. 1. Did you think the story had to end as it does? Could another outcome have been possible? Explain your answer.

2. Can you find any humor in "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment"?

3. Is the story an allegory? If so, in what way? What symbols, if any, are used?

4. Does Hawthorne give the reader any foreshadowing of the ending? How?

5. What do you think of Hawthorne's skill as a writer? How does he achieve it? Does he compare favorably with any writer of your national literature in style and subject matter? Give examples.

OPTIONAL PROJECTS

FOR INTERPRETATION

1. In a critical review of Hawthorne's *TWICE-TOLD TALES*, Edgar Allan Poe stated his own philosophy of short story writing. Using the following excerpt taken from that review as a guide, write a short composition in which you apply the principles set forth by Poe to "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment." Try to show the extent to which Hawthorne's story does or does not fulfill Poe's philosophy.

"A skillful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single *effect* to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents—he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. If his very initial sentence tend not to the outbringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition, there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one preestablished design. And by such means, with such care and skill, a picture is at length painted which leaves in the mind of him who contemplates it with a kindred art, a sense of the fullest satisfaction. The idea of the tale has been presented unblemished, because undisturbed, and this is an end unattainable by the novel. Undue brevity is just as exceptionable here as in the poem, but undue length is yet more to be avoided."

2. The problem raised by "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment" is essentially: Is experience the best teacher? Prepare a speech of three to five minutes in length in which you consider this question. Keep in mind that Poor Richard (Benjamin Franklin) said: "Experience keeps a dear school but a fool will learn in no other." Was he right? Will a fool learn only from experience? Hawthorne seems to question whether people do learn from experience at all. With whom do you agree?

During the half century when the literature discussed in this section was written, the United States went through some of the greatest changes in its history. In the middle of the 19th century it was still mainly a country of farmers. Trade and manufacturing were growing more important with each decade but it was not until the 1870s that a majority of Americans were making a living in non-farming occupations. Meanwhile, the population soared from 23 million in 1850 to 76 million in 1900. In the middle of the century Negro slavery was still a fact of American life. The nation was being split in two by it. The South defended slavery more and more vigorously, the North criticized it more and more earnestly. The bitter war waged between the North and South from 1861 to 1865 permanently altered the character of American life. For many people—the great poet Walt Whitman for one—it was the central fact of their lives. For the South it meant the lingering flavor of defeat; for the Negroes it meant freedom from slavery, if not all the freedom enjoyed by the whites.

After the Civil War the nation entered a period of vast commercial expansion. Railroads stretched from one end of the country to the other. Factories were built. Cities grew bigger. Fortunes were made.

Americans, whether native-born or immigrants, earned more than ever before. They had more opportunities, more freedom. Often, as a result, they felt a patriotism, a trust in their country, that made them sure that the United States was the greatest nation on earth. Only a few of their fellow countrymen felt otherwise. However, these few included some of the most notable thinkers of the time, and, most significant for us, some of the best writers.

Throughout history men have expressed their dissatisfaction with their present condition through the written and spoken word. Thus, it should not be surprising that in the United States, as in other countries, the greatest writers have often questioned the values held dear by the majority of their countrymen. The thinkers in a society, writers among them, are the persons most likely to examine prevailing values and to discern flaws in the social structure before these flaws have been recognized by society as a whole. This examination of values was as prevalent in the 19th century as it is in the 20th.

Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, for example, both denied that making money was as important as many Americans believed. On the other hand, both authors strongly affirmed the rights of the individual—and the dignity of the individual was then and is now a vital part of the American creed. Or take the case of Walt Whitman. His attitude toward sex was far more tolerant than that of the rest of his countrymen—but in his affirmation of democracy throughout his poems, he expressed values shared by most Americans. Mark Twain seemed either to conform to typical American values or to amuse his audience by adroitly making fun of them. Yet underneath he felt a brooding pessimism not only about American values but about life itself. The writings that he suppressed, and which few knew about, show his gloom. By the time he died he considered life, at best, an evil dream.

As we have seen, writers of the first half of the 19th century, such as Poe and Hawthorne, were part of an international romantic trend in literature and art. Among the many characteristics of this romantic trend was a stress on the individual instead of the group, on the wild instead of the tame, on the irregular instead of the regular. In addition, the Romanticism of Poe and Hawthorne was dark and brooding. But all American Romanticism was not.

The American Romanticists of the mid-19th century, who termed themselves Transcendentalists and who were led by Ralph Waldo Emerson, preached the positive life. Their group included two of the most significant writers America has produced so far, Emerson and his young friend, Henry

David Thoreau. They became movers and shakers whose writing has had more and more impact as time has gone on.

Transcendentalism has been defined philosophically as "the recognition in man of the capacity of knowing truth intuitively, or of attaining knowledge transcending the reach of the senses." Emerson drew a sharp distinction between the "Understanding," by which he meant the rational faculty, and the "Reason," by which he meant the suprarational or intuitive faculty, and he regarded the "Reason" as much more authoritative in spiritual matters than the "Understanding." "Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind," he proclaimed in a speech at Harvard University in 1838 in which he glorified intuition and repudiated all external religious authority. The core ideas of transcendental thought in the abstract can best be studied in Emerson.

There were also several other concepts that accompanied Transcendentalism and which have had even more influence. One was the idea that nature was ennobling, that men were somehow better for being out in the woods or meadows, and that on the other hand commerce was degrading, that a life spent in business was a wasted life. Another was the idea that the individual soul could reach God, or as Emerson called him, the Over-Soul, without the help of churches and clergy.

All these doctrines may sound more or less abstract to us today. Yet there was intellectual dynamite in them. For 30 years in the middle of the 19th century, Emerson preached to America through his lectures and essays. He preached Transcendentalism and more than Transcendentalism. He told us that we should be self-reliant and at the same time unselfish. He asserted that there was a greatness in us all that needed only to be set free. And he gave his message in prose poetry of remarkable, individual beauty. Henry Thoreau stood ready to urge an even more powerful doctrine, but few listened to him during his short life. It was only later that the world paid attention. Then Thoreau became the fiercest enemy American commercial life has ever had. He insisted that getting a living stood in the way of life. To keep from having to work at jobs in which he had no interest, he went to live for two years in the woods, in a cabin he built for himself. There he lived with almost complete independence.

Thoreau in his writing made two notable contributions to American ideas. One, just mentioned, was that people should *live* instead of working for a living. The other was that if people thought a law was unjust they could resist it by civil disobedience. Gandhi was only one of many attracted by this idea and he used it with enormous success in India. The core of Gandhi's philosophy appears in his *Autobiography* (1924).

The doctrine of civil disobedience is at the heart of the present-day struggle for civil rights in the United States. The late Dr. Martin Luther King, who was greatly influenced by Thoreau's ideas of non-violent resistance to injustices, also espoused the non-violent teaching of Gandhi. Thoreau's best expression of the idea of non-violence appears in his essay, "Civil Disobedience," the philosophy of which took root in the thinking of both Gandhi and King.

Thoreau's best expression of the idea of independent living comes in his book *Walden*, which has become a literary classic.

About the time that Emerson and Thoreau were writing, two other great authors were developing their talents. They were Herman Melville and Walt Whitman. Melville was a storyteller whose fiction grew deeper and deeper as he wrote. He started with travel and sea stories, based in part on his own adventures, and went on to tales as modern in their subtlety as anything written today. In between, he composed one of the most significant novels of the 19th century, *Moby-Dick*. Moby-Dick is a whale pursued by the demonic captain of a whaling ship. To the captain the whale represents the evil of the world. When he tries to destroy it, he himself is destroyed. The account is given in splendid, sometimes old-fashioned prose. It is interlarded with information on whales and whaling and peopled with a brilliantly assorted cast of characters, of whom the captain remains the most memorable.

Walt Whitman was determined to be the poet of democracy. Though America has never cared as much for poetry as for prose, Whitman thought that he could reach the American people by throwing aside the traditional ornaments and prettiness of verse

and creating his own form. He worked at his great poem, or book of poems, *Leaves of Grass*, throughout his life. He developed a kind of free verse, without rhyme or a fixed rhythm but distinguished by Biblical cadences and impressive repetition. Through his new medium he tried constantly to reach those people no other poet had reached. His poetry was for the lowest as well as the highest on the American economic ladder. He put everybody in his poetry and tried to reach everybody.

Yet, ironically enough, Whitman failed to reach the common man, who would doubtless have approved of being represented in poetry but who was put off by Whitman's new poetic form. If the common man liked any poetry, it was poetry of a traditional form. He was given poetry in this form by the man who established himself as the most popular, though by no means the best, American poet of the 19th century. The poet was Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, once a college classmate of Hawthorne.

In an era when America was trying so hard to be new that it overlooked the riches of the Old World, Longfellow pioneered in studying—and then teaching—European literature. In 1836 he became Harvard College's professor of modern languages and stayed at Harvard for nearly 20 years. During that time he produced several volumes of poetry, of which *The Belfry of Bruges and Other Poems*, according to some critics, was his best. In his lyrics he drew on the techniques of European poetry, as well as on his own native creativity, and acquired a mastery of rhyme and rhythm. The ideas he expressed were generally simple ones and his technique displayed them to advantage. He expressed them musically and powerfully, with the result that more people read him than any other American poet.

Though his life was scarred by the tragic death of both his first and his second wife, his poetry struck a manly, affirmative note. He exhorted the reader in "A Psalm of Life":

Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait.

Not that his optimism was automatic. He had his somber or sad poems, too. But by and large he was the poet of the affirmative, and that helped to make him the one Americans loved best. Today his verse may sound trite, and its optimistic tone may grate on us. Yet Longfellow, though not a major poet, was a notable minor one.

If Longfellow was the prototype of the public bard throughout the middle of the century, Emily Dickinson was the opposite. Abnormally shy and retiring, she lived her life in complete shadow. The poetry she wrote—irregular in its rhyme and rhythm, whimsical in its imagery, wry in its view of the world—was the reverse of Longfellow's. While she wrote, no one paid attention to her nor did she seem to wish anyone to. After her death her lyrics began to be circulated. They aroused more and more enthusiasm. Today she is hailed as one of the outstanding American poets, eagerly studied by scholars and critics who dismiss the popular Longfellow.

Captivated by the effervescence of her poetry and its remarkable blend of wit, pathos, and love, the reader can easily become what Miss Dickinson was when she announced:

Inebriate of air am I,
And debauchée of dew,
Reeling, through endless summer days,
From inns of molten blue.

She wrote of death as much as of life, of defeat more than of victory. Nevertheless, her creative imagination turned the one into the other. Death became life through a kind of inner sight that is evident in many of her poems. For example, she says:

I never saw a moor,
I never saw the sea;
Yet know I how the heather looks,
And what a wave must be.

I never spoke with God
Nor visited in heaven—
Yet certain am I of the spot
As if the chart* were given.

* Some versions give checks here.

Our next great writer was the man who called himself Mark Twain. Born Samuel Clemens, he grew up next to the Mississippi River, became a pilot on it, went to Nevada and then to California, and made his way into literature via journalism. A thoroughly American writer, he traveled over a good deal of the Western world and then reported his travels in a jocular, often scoffing way. He was not impressed by either Europe or antiquity and showed it in his books. His independence and individualism delighted the American public. On the other hand, as he grew older, he found he was not impressed by many things in America, either. The nation he saw after the Civil War seemed a greedy one. He criticized it but was careful to do so in a humorous way. Because Mark Twain developed into a superb comic in both his writing and in his many public appearances as a lecturer, the country refused to take his criticism seriously. By the time he became an old man, his view both of America and the world was, we know, deeply pessimistic.

Although both the Europe of the past and the America of the present repelled him, one great source of material remained for him to write about: his own boyhood. Turning to it in his prime, he drew from it the inspiration for his two greatest works, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. In Tom and Huck he created characters so appealing that they have become part of American mythology. Both books are sagas of boyhood but the second one in particular has a depth that the reader may not see at first glance. It is a book for the discerning adult. Underneath the golden haze of boyhood there lies the sense of evil and disaster that would haunt Twain as an aging man.

As the 19th century neared its end, a few other writers saw life basically in the same hard terms as Mark Twain. One of them was another newspaper man, Stephen Crane, who died just as the 20th century was beginning. He wrote novels about characters America wanted to disregard and he described them—and the bleak world in which they lived—so graphically that after his death his works became classics. He composed his first novel, for example, about a prostitute. He wrote another, entitled *The Red Badge of Courage*, about what it meant to be in battle. Set in the Civil War, it was marked by a convincing sense of reality in spite of the fact that Crane himself had never experienced combat. He also wrote somber short stories and bitter free verse. He provides an introduction for us to the 20th century, when much writing, though certainly not all, is as bleak as his. The somber views of Mark Twain and Stephen Crane were largely ignored by Americans of that time. The country was full of optimism.

Lastly, we come to Henry James, who not only bridged the 19th and 20th centuries but connected America and Europe. In his slow-moving, magnificent fiction he shows what happens when characters from different cultures meet. He himself was international. Born in America of a distinguished American family, he died in England, a British subject. He knew the true meaning of changing environments.

His novels, and to a smaller extent his short stories, have had much influence on modern American writers. The intensity with which he studied human beings and the depth of his understanding of them have made him one of the fathers of the psychological novel. In the major scenes in his fiction he slows up time so that we can sense every nuance in a conversation or a character's action.

Critics argue about what his best books are but a good case can be made for two of his novels in particular. One, *The American*, is an early novel. Its hero is a wealthy American named Christopher Newman who goes to Paris and meets a beautiful widow from an aristocratic French family. The widow falls in love with him but her family, with one exception, detests him. They thwart the proposed marriage, the widow enters a convent and Newman is defeated. The other novel, one of his middle period, is *The Ambassadors*. It is more nearly comic than tragic, and it is more urbane than *The American*. In this case the European values are shown through sympathetic characters, while some of the American values are shown through the eyes of Massachusetts Puritans. The ambassadors of the book's title are a mixed lot. But the leading one, Lambert Strether, is one of he most sympathetic characters in Henry James's fiction.

As we end this section, the 20th century has just begun, with some of the most exciting literature that America has ever known. Its foundations have been firmly laid by the 19th-century authors we have been reading, but there is no doubt that they would be astounded, and we hope impressed, by the writing produced by their successors.

CHAPTER VIII

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

RALPH WALDO EMERSON (1803-1882)

A man's power to connect his thought with its proper symbol, and so to utter it, depends on the simplicity of his character, that is, upon his love of truth and his desire to communicate it without loss. The corruption of man is followed by the corruption of language. When simplicity of character and the sovereignty of ideas is broken up by the prevalence of secondary desires—the desire of riches, of pleasure, of power, and of praise—and duplicity and falsehood take place of simplicity and truth, the power over nature as an interpreter of the will is in a degree lost; new imagery ceases to be created, and old words are perverted to stand for things which are not; a paper currency is employed, when there is no bullion in the vaults. In due time the fraud is manifest, and words lose all power to stimulate the understanding or the affections. Hundreds of writers may be found in every long-civilized nation who for a short time believe and make others believe that they see and utter truths who do not of themselves clothe one thought in its natural garment, but who feed unconsciously on the language created by the primary writers of the country, those, namely, who hold primarily on nature.

—From his essay, "Nature"

Emerson (1803-1882) developed into the leading author of the mid-19th century. As head of the Transcedental movement, he captained a group of revolutionary Romanticists. Even if their numbers were few, their lasting importance was great. Among them was his closest friend, Henry Thoreau, and there is little doubt that he helped to form some of Thoreau's ideas. Emerson also influenced and encouraged Walt Whitman.

Emerson was born in Boston, where his father was a Unitarian clergyman, as six generations of Emersons had been before him. While a student at Harvard he began keeping journals—records of his thoughts—a practice he continued throughout his life. He later drew on the journals for material for his essays and poetry. After graduating, he ran a school for young ladies for a time, but eventually he returned to Harvard to study for the ministry. Following his second graduation he served as pastor of a church for a few years, but finally resigned his position because he had doubts about the beliefs of the church.

In 1832 Emerson toured Europe, meeting such major English poets as Wordsworth, Carlyle, and Coleridge. Through his acquaintance with these men he became closely involved with German idealism and Transcendentalism. Returning to Boston, he devoted most of his time to lecturing. An address that he delivered at the Harvard Divinity School in 1838 in which he attacked formal religion and defended intuitive spiritual experience aroused such an adverse reaction that he was not invited back to Harvard for 30 years.

Emerson was concerned with many re-

form movements, among them the abolition of slavery. In 1840 he joined with other Transcendentalists in an attempt to spread ideas through publication of a small magazine named *The Dial*.

At this point in his career, Emerson's ideas seemed radical and dangerous. The ex-president of the United States, John Quincy Adams, spoke of Emerson's "wild and visionary phantasies," which seemed heretical. However, to the men and women of his generation, and to younger people, he seemed a liberator from old conventions, a leader in experimentation and self-reliance. Emerson rejected what he considered to be the philosophy of materialism and moral relativism prevalent in both Europe and America. He rejected both the formal religion of the churches and the Deistic philosophy which portrayed the world as a watch-like mechanism set in motion by a deity who was no longer present. Emerson felt this religion or philosophy was cold and emotionless. His religion was based on an intuitive belief in an ultimate unity, which he called the "Over-Soul." Because he believed in this unity, Emerson saw the world as harmonious, with seeming inequalities balanced in the long run.

Emerson envisioned religion as an emotional communication between an individual soul and the universal "Over-Soul" of which it was a part. He held that intuition was a more certain way of knowing than reason and that the mind could intuitively perceive the existence of the Over-Soul and of certain absolutes. Having this certain knowledge, a man should trust himself to decide what was right and to act accordingly.

Later in his life, as his ideas gained popular acceptance, Emerson was honored as a leading American philosopher and writer. His greatest fame, however, came from his ability as a speaker. Journals and speeches were the forms of communication most natural to him, and his essays were usually derived from lectures he had already given. As a result even his written work has a casual style.

Emerson's influence on American literature resulted not so much from the quality of his own writing, but from the guidance and intellectual climate he provided for other writers such as Thoreau, Whitman, and Emily Dickinson. In the *American Scholar*, in an article written in 1837, he called for a distinctive American style, dealing with American subjects. Emerson urged the American people to trust themselves and give full rein to nature, which he believed to be basically good. He wanted them to declare their independence both as individuals and as a nation. He said so most stirringly in "Self-Reliance." His progress in this essay follows a spiral rather than a straight line, but that was the Transcendental way. He uses many comparisons, especially metaphors, and although he is not always easy to understand in detail, the general idea of his work stands out clearly enough. Furthermore, he draws on his vast reading in the classics of Western European literature, from the days of Greece and Rome down to the mid-19th century. However, his basic message does not depend on the influence of these sources. Rather his references are suggestive, used to enrich his theme.

SELECTION 1

In this excerpt from "Self-Reliance" Emerson urges us to trust ourselves, rather than be ruled by others' advice.

From Self-Reliance

There is a time in every man's education when he arrives at the conviction that

envy is ignorance; that imitation is suicide; that he must take himself for better, for worse, as his portion; that though the wide universe is full of good, no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground which is given to him to till. The power which resides in him is new in nature, and none but he knows what that is which he can do nor does he know until he has tried. Not for nothing one face, one character, one fact, makes much impression on him, and another none. This sculpture in the memory is not without pre-established harmony. The eye was placed where one ray should fall, that it might testify of that particular ray. We but half express ourselves, and are ashamed of that divine idea which each of us represents. It may be safely trusted as proportionate and of good issues, so it be faithfully imparted, but God will not have his work made manifest by cowards. A man is relieved and gay when he has put his heart into his work and done his best; but what he has said or done otherwise, shall give him no peace. It is a deliverance which does not deliver. In the attempt his genius deserts him; no muse befriends; no invention, no hope.

Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string. Accept the place the divine providence has found for you, the society of your contemporaries, the connection of events. Great men have always done so, and confided themselves childlike to the genius of their age, betraying their perception that the absolutely trustworthy was seated at their heart, working through their hands, predominating in all their being. And we are now men, and must accept in the highest mind the same transcendent destiny; and not minors and invalids in a protected corner, not cowards fleeing before a revolution, but guides, redeemers, and benefactors, obeying the Almighty effort, and advancing on Chaos and the Dark.

What pretty oracles nature yields us on this text, in the face and behavior of children, babes, and even brutes! That divided and rebel mind, that distrust of a sentiment because our arithmetic has computed the strength and means opposed to our purpose, these have not. Their mind being whole, their eye is as yet unconquered, and when we look in their faces we are disconcerted. Infancy conforms to nobody: all conform to it, so that one babe commonly makes four or five out of the adults who prattle and play to it. So God has armed youth and puberty and manhood no less with its own piquancy and charm, and made it enviable and gracious and its claims not to be put by, if it will stand by itself. Do not think the youth has no force, because he cannot speak to you and me. Hark! in the next room his voice is sufficiently clear and emphatic. It seems he knows how to speak to his contemporaries. Bashful or bold, then, he will know how to make us seniors very unnecessary.

The nonchalance of boys who are sure of a dinner, and would disdain as much as a lord to do or say aught to conciliate one, is the healthy attitude of human nature. A boy is in the parlor what the pit is in the playhouse;[1] independent, irresponsible, looking out from his corner on such people and facts as pass by, he tries and sentences them on their merits, in the swift, summary way of boys, as good, bad, interesting, silly, eloquent, troublesome. He cumbers himself never about consequ-

1. What the pit is in the playhouse—In English theaters of the 16th century, the pit, or ground floor, was the cheapest location because it had no seats. The members of the audience who stood in the pit heckled the actors and made loud outspoken criticisms of the performance.

ences, about interests: he gives an independent, genuine verdict. You must court him: he does not court you. But the man is, as it were, clapped into jail by his consciousness. As soon as he has once acted or spoken with eclat, he is a committed person, watched by the sympathy or the hatred of hundreds, whose affections must now enter into his account. There is no Lethe[2] for this. Ah, that he could pass again into his neutrality! Who can thus avoid all pledges, and having observed, observe again from the same unaffected, unbiassed, unbribable, unaffrighted innocence, must always be formidable. He would utter opinions on all passing affairs, which being seen to be not private, but

2. Lethe—In Greek mythology, the river of forgetfulness.

necessary, would sink like darts into the ear of men, and put them in fear.

These are the voices which we hear in solitude, but they grow faint and inaudible as we enter into the world. Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members. Society is a joint-stock company, in which the members agree, for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater. The virtue in most request is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion. It loves not realities and creators, but names and customs.

Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist. He who would gather immortal palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness. Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind. . . .

SELECTION I

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. "Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string" is one of Emerson's most quoted lines. Cite examples from the first two paragraphs of the excerpt which give Emerson's reasons for his belief in self-reliance and explain each example.
2. Explain why Emerson believes that conformity is an enemy of self-reliance, basing your explanation on the following quotations:
   (a) Infancy conforms to nobody: all conform to it.
   (b) Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members.
   (c) Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist.
   (d) Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind.
3. What do you think Emerson means when he says that the adult is "clapped into jail by his consciousness"?
4. In what way, according to Emerson, does youth exhibit force?
5. For Emerson conformity was not a desirable characteristic for one to have. Do you think there are times when conformity is desirable or even necessary? Explain your answer.
6. To what extent are you self-reliant? Is it more difficult to be self-reliant in a modern technological society than in one which is more rural?

SELECTION II

In this second excerpt from his noted essay "Self-Reliance" Emerson does two things. First he admits frankly that the world condemns us if we are either independent or inconsistent. Then he urges us to trust our own nature and be independent and inconsistent anyway. He preaches to us as brilliantly as he ever preached from a pulpit in the days when he was a minister or from a lecture platform when he read to audiences throughout the country.

From Self-Reliance, continued

For non-conformity the world whips you with its displeasure. And therefore a man must know how to estimate a sour face. The bystanders look askance on him in the public street or in the friend's parlor. If this aversation had its origin in contempt and resistance like his own, he might well go home with a sad countenance; but the sour faces of the multitude, like their sweet faces, have no deep cause, but are put on and off as the wind blows and a newspaper directs. Yet is the discontent of the multitude more formidable than that of the senate and the college. It is easy enough for a firm man who knows the world to brook the rage of the cultivated classes. Their rage is decorous and prudent, for they are timid as being very vulnerable themselves. But when to their feminine rage the indignation of the people is added, when the ignorant and the poor are aroused, when the unintelligent brute force that lies at the bottom of society is made to growl and mow, it needs the habit of magnanimity and religion to treat it godlike as a trifle of no concernment.

The other terror that scares us from self-trust is our consistency; a reverence for our past act or word, because the eyes of others have no other data for computing our orbit than our past acts, and we are loath to disappoint them.

But why should you keep your head over your shoulder? Why drag about this corpse of your memory, lest you contradict somewhat you have stated in this or that public place? Suppose you should contradict yourself; what then? It seems to be a rule of wisdom never to rely on your memory alone, scarcely even in acts of pure memory, but to bring the past for judgment into the thousand-eyed present, and live ever in a new day. In your metaphysics you have denied personality to the Deity; yet when the devout motions of the soul come, yield to them heart and life, though they should clothe God with shape and color. Leave your theory, as Joseph his coat in the hand of the harlot,[1] and flee.

A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well concern himself with his shadow on the wall. Speak what you think now in hard words and to-morrow speak what to-morrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradicts everything you said to-day.—'Ah, so you shall be sure to be misunderstood?'—Is it so bad, then, to be misunderstood? Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood.

I suppose no man can violate his nature. All the sallies of his will are rounded in by the law of his being, as the inequalities of Andes and Himmaleh[2] are insignificant in

1. Joseph . . . of the harlot—This is a reference to an episode in the Bible (Genesis 39:12) which relates the difficulties Joseph experienced while a slave in the house of an Egyptian master.
2. Himmaleh—Himalayas, a mountain range in Asia; Andes, a mountain range in South America.

the curve of the sphere. Nor does it matter how you gauge and try him. A character is like an acrostic or Alexandrian stanza;—read it forward, backward, or across, it still spells the same thing. In this pleasing, contrite wood-life which God allows me, let me record day by day my honest thought without prospect or retrospect, and, I cannot doubt, it will be found symmetrical, though I mean it not and see it not. My book should smell of pines and resound with the hum of insects. The swallow over my window should interweave that thread or straw he carries in his bill into my web also. We pass for what we are. Character teaches above our wills. Men imagine that they communicate their virtue or vice only by overt actions, and do not see that virtue or vice emit a breath every moment. . .

I hope in these days we have heard the last of conformity and consistency. Let the words be gazetted and ridiculous henceforward. Instead of the gong for dinner, let us hear a whistle from the Spartan fife. Let us never bow and apologize more. A great man is coming to eat at my house. I do not wish to please him; I wish that he should wish to please me. I will stand here for humanity, and though I would make it kind, I would make it true. Let us affront and reprimand the smooth mediocrity and squalid contentment of the times, and hurl in the face of custom, and trade, and office, the fact which is the upshot of all history, that there is a great responsible Thinker and Actor working wherever a man works; that a true man belongs to no other time or place, but is the centre of things. Where he is, there is nature. He measures you, and all men, and all events. Ordinarily, everybody in society reminds us of somewhat else, or of some other person. Character, reality, reminds you of nothing else; it takes place of the whole creation. The man must be so much, that he must make all circumstances indifferent. Every true man is a cause, a country, and an age; requires infinite spaces and numbers and time fully to accomplish his design;—and posterity seems to follow his steps as a train of clients. A man Caesar is born, and for ages after we have a Roman Empire. Christ is born, and millions of minds so grow and cleave to his genius, that he is confounded with virtue and the possible of man. An institution is the lengthened shadow of one man; as Monachism, of the Hermit Antony,[3] the Reformation, of Luther,[4] Quakerism, of Fox,[5] Methodism, of Wesley,[6] Abolition, of Clarkson,[7] Scipio, Milton called "the height of Rome,"[8] and all history resolves itself very easily into the biography of a few stout and earnest persons.

Let a man then know his worth, and keep things under his feet. Let him not peep or steal, or skulk up and down with the air of a charity-boy, a bastard, or an interloper, in the world which exists for

3. Monachism, of the Hermit Antony—Monachism, a system of living according to fixed rules in groups isolated from society and devoted to religion, was founded by the Egyptian hermit monk St. Antony (251-356? A.D.)
4. The Reformation, of Luther—Martin Luther (1483-1546), a German theological writer and Biblical scholar and translator, was a leader of the Reformation, a 16th century religious movement to reform the European Catholic Church which led to the establishment of the Protestant churches.
5. Quakerism, of Fox—George Fox (1624-1691), an English religious leader, founded the Society of Friends, or Quakers, about 1650.
6. Methodism, of Wesley—John Wesley (1703-1791), an English clergyman, founded the Methodist church.
7. Abolition, of Clarkson—Thomas Clarkson (1760-1846) was the leader of an English movement to abolish slavery.
8. Scipio. . "the height of Rome"—Scipio was the Roman general who destroyed the city of Carthage in 146 B.C.; John Milton, a British poet (1608-1674).

him. But the man in the street, finding no worth in himself which corresponds to the force which built a tower or sculptured a marble god, feels poor when he looks on these. To him a palace, a statue, or a costly book have an alien and forbidding air, much like a gay equipage, and seems to say like that, "Who are you, sir?" Yet they all are his suitors for his notice, petitioners to this faculties that they will come out and take possession. The picture waits for my verdict; it is not to command me, but I am to settle its claims to praise. That popular fable of the sot who was picked up dead drunk in the street, carried to the duke's house, washed and dressed and laid in the duke's bed, and, on his waking, treated with all obsequious ceremony like the duke, and assured that he had been insane, owes its popularity to the fact, that it symbolizes so well the state of man, who is in the world a sort of sot, but now and then wakes up, exercises his reason and finds himself a true prince. . .

SELECTION II

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Emerson states that besides conformity, the other great enemy of self-reliance is *consistency*. Explain how he develops each of the following statements to advance his argument.

(a) A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds.

(b) To be great is to be misunderstood.

(c) An institution is the lengthened shadow of one man.

2. How does the world punish nonconformists?

3. What does Emerson feel controls the attitudes of most bystanders of the cultivated classes?

4. How is the rage of the cultivated classes different from that of the mass of society?

5. Emerson cites examples of men who have been misunderstood in history. Do you agree with his choices? Why or why not? Can you name others whom you feel have been misunderstood, giving your reasons for this misunderstanding on the part of society?

6. How does Emerson feel that men should act in the face of custom and tradition? In the face of smooth mediocrity and squalid contentment? Do you agree with him? Give your reasons.

7. Does Emerson consider Hermit Antony, Luther, Fox, Wesley, and Clarkson "true" men? Explain.

8. What is Emerson's concept of history: That events make men or that outstanding men shape events? Discuss.

9. Write a short paragraph in which you explain the meaning of the following quotations from Emerson.

(a) Every true man is a cause, a country, and an age.

(b) I suppose no man can violate his nature.

(c) Let a man then know his worth, and keep things under his feet.

CHAPTER IX

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

HENRY DAVID THOREAU (1817-1862)

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear, nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion.

—from *Walden*

Thoreau (1817-1862) was born in Concord, a village near Boston where many of the literary figures of the 19th century, including Emerson, lived. After graduating from Harvard and teaching school for a few years, Thoreau went to live with Emerson both to study with him and to work as a handyman. Later in his life he traveled a little, but in general Thoreau stayed near his home. He had a strong attachment to his family, and he preferred to travel vicariously through books. The trips he did take were often camping trips, for he enjoyed the outdoors and was a skillful woodsman.

Both Thoreau's Transcendental philosophy and his scientific knowledge contributed to his love of nature. In *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, he wrote about a canoeing trip he made with his brother. Later he built himself a cabin in the woods by Walden Pond, and lived there for two years, reporting on his experiences in *Walden*. He wanted to live alone and to depend on his own mental and physical resources. He raised his own food and spent very little money, devoting most of his time to study and reflection.

Thoreau's style is often conversational in tone, similar to that found in Emerson's journals, so on the surface his books seem to be nothing more than casual accounts of his trips. In reality, however, they are carefully arranged, their design helping to convey Thoreau's meaning. *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, for example, compresses a longer period of time into seven days; different subjects are discussed each day. The progression of these subjects, and the daily cycle of sunrise and sunset provide the book's structure. Thoreau worked on the book for 10 years

before finally publishing it at his own expense.

Walden is also deceptively casual. Again Thoreau condensed his two and a half years in the woods into one year, stressing the unifying theme of seasonal changes as he progressed from the summer growth of his bean crop to its harvest, and to the death of the plants and replanting in the spring. Thoreau uses the little world around Walden Pond to illustrate his philosophy and observations about life.

Through his writing Thoreau wanted to illustrate that the pursuit of material things had no value. He desired a life of contemplation, of being in harmony with nature, and of acting on his own principles. His study of Eastern religions contributed to his desire for a simple life, while his reaction against such Yankee pragmatists as Benjamin Franklin is also apparent. Both Franklin and Thoreau advocated thrift and hard work, but while Franklin expected the frugal to get richer and richer, Thoreau thought physical labor and a minimum of material goods made men more sensitive and kept them closer to nature.

In 1847 Thoreau was imprisoned briefly for refusing to pay a tax while the government supported a war he considered unjust. His refusal to pay was consistent with his belief in using civil disobedience to protest government actions, a philosophy he explains in his essay, "Civil Disobedience." He was also strongly opposed to slavery. Thoreau was very much an individualist, distrusting group action and preferring to depend on individual reform for the improvement of society.

SELECTION 1

Thoreau stated his prickly doctrine of independence as powerfully in "Life Without Principle" as in any of his essays. He condemned all kinds of compromise, as Emerson had done, and advised his fellow citizens to enjoy life for its own sake. They should spend their time, he told them, living rather than getting a living. Thoreau considered most activities of the average American to be a waste of time. In the first of two excerpts from the essay he describes the irony of life in a village in which a man is praised for cutting down the woods but condemned for walking in them to appreciate their beauty.

From Life Without Principle

Let us consider the way in which we spend our lives.

This world is a place of business. What an infinite bustle! I am awaked almost every night by the panting of the locomotive. It interrupts my dreams. There is no sabbath. It would be glorious to see mankind at leisure for once. It is nothing but work, work, work. I cannot easily buy a blankbook to write thoughts in; they are commonly ruled for dollars and cents. An Irishman, seeing me making a minute in the fields, took it for granted that I was calculating my wages. If a man was tossed out of a window when an infant, and so made a cripple for life, or scared out of his wits by the Indians, it is regretted chiefly because he was thus incapacited for—business! I think that there is nothing, not even crime, more opposed to poetry, to philosophy, ay, to life itself, than this incessant business.

There is a coarse and boisterous money-making fellow in the outskirts of our town, who is going to build a bankwall under the hill along the edge of his meadow. The powers have put this into his head to keep him out of mischief, and he wishes me to spend three weeks digging there with him. The result will be that he will perhaps get some more money to hoard, and leave for

his heirs to spend foolishly. If I do this, most will commend me as an industrious and hard-working man; but if I choose to devote myself to certain labors which yield more real profit, though but little money, they may be inclined to look on me as an idler. Nevertheless, as I do not need the police of meaningless labor to regulate me, and do not see anything absolutely praiseworthy in this fellow's undertaking any more than in many an enterprise of our own or foreign governments, however amusing it may be to him or them, I prefer to finish my education at a different school.

If a man walks in the woods for love of them half of each day, he is in danger of being regarded as a loafer; but if he spends his whole day as a speculator, shearing off those woods and making earth bald before her time, he is esteemed an industrious and enterprising citizen. As if a town had no interest in its forests but to cut them down!

Most men would feel insulted if it were proposed to employ them in throwing stones over a wall, and then in throwing them back, merely that they might earn their wages. But many are no more worthily employed now. For instance: just after sunrise, one summer morning, I noticed one of my neighbors walking beside his team, which was slowly drawing a heavy hewn stone swung under the axle, surrounded by an atmosphere of industry,—his day's work begun,—his brow commenced to sweat—a reproach to all sluggards and idlers—pausing abreast the shoulders of his oxen, and half turning round with a flourish of his merciful whip, while they gained their length on him. And I thought, such is the labor which the American Congress exists to protect, —honest, manly toil,—honest as the day is long,—that makes his bread taste sweet, and keeps society sweet,—which all men respect and have consecrated; one of the sacred band, doing the needful but irksome drudgery. Indeed, I felt a slight reproach, because I observed this from a window, and was not abroad and stirring about a similar business. The day went by, and at evening I passed the yard of another neighbor, who keeps many servants, and spends much money foolishly, while he adds nothing to the common stock, and there I saw the stone of the morning lying beside a whimsical structure intended to adorn this Lord Timothy Dexter's[1] premises, and the dignity forthwith departed from the teamster's labor, in my eyes. In my opinion, the sun was made to light worthier toil than this. I may add that his employer has since run off, in debt to a good part of the town, and, after passing through Chancery,[2] has settled somewhere else, there to become once more a patron of the arts.

The ways by which you may get money almost without exception lead downward. To have done anything by which you earned money *merely* is to have been truly idle or worse. If the laborer gets no more than the wages which his employer pays him, he is cheated, he cheats himself. If you would get money as a writer or lecturer, you must be popular, which is to go down perpendicularly. Those services which the community will most readily pay for, it is most disagreeable to render. You are paid for being something less than a man. The State does not commonly reward a genius any more wisely. Even the

1. Timothy Dexter—American Merchant (1747-1806) who gained a fortune from the American Revolution and by shrewd mercantile transactions. He was called "Lord Timothy Dexter" by his fellows. He also wrote a book in which he spelled words as he pleased and left out all punctuation.

2. Chancery—a court having jurisdiction in cases not fully covered by common law.

poet-laureate would rather not have to celebrate the accidents of royalty. He must be bribed with a pipe of wine; and perhaps another poet is called away from his muse to gauge that very pipe. As for my own business, even that kind of surveying which I could do with most satisfaction my employers do not want. They would prefer that I should do my work coarsely and not too well, ay, not well enough. When I observe that there are different ways of surveying, my employer commonly asks which will give him the most land, not which is most correct. I once invented a rule for measuring cord-wood, and tried to introduce it in Boston; but the measurer there told me that the sellers did not wish to have their wood measured correctly,—that he was already too accurate for them, and therefore they commonly got their wood measured in Charlestown before crossing the bridge.

The aim of the laborer should be, not to get his living, to get "a good job," but to perform well a certain work; and, even in a pecuniary sense, it would be economy for a town to pay its laborers so well that they would not feel that they were working for low ends, as for a livelihood merely, but for scientific, or even moral ends. Do not hire a man who does your work for money, but him who does it for love of it. . .

SELECTION I

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Like Emerson, Thoreau was a Transcendentalist. What similarities do you see in their attitudes?
2. According to Thoreau, in what way does business control the life and thought of people?
3. Why did Thoreau turn down a job he was offered? Where does he prefer to get his education?
4. What was the attitude toward work commonly held in Thoreau's day?
5. In his account of the labor of the man hauling a stone, Thoreau implies that the dignity of the man's labor was lost. Why was this so? Do you agree with Thoreau's opinion? Why or why not?
6. Thoreau says "to have done anything by which you earn money *merely* is to have been truly idle or worse." What does he mean by this statement?
7. What kind of services is Thoreau referring to when he observes that "the services which the community will most readily pay for are the most disagreeable to render?" Do you feel the same way? Explain.
8. What should the aim of a laborer be?
9. What does Thoreau think about making money?

SELECTION II

In his second excerpt Thoreau presses his point further. As one of the crudest, and oddest, ways of making a living, he cites the digging for gold in California, which had begun not long before he wrote the essay. But he says in a part of the essay not included here that New England is just as bad as California. Life with principle is just as hard to live on the East Coast as on the West Coast. Thoreau says that the so-called wise men he hears of really have no wisdom about life to give him. He learns little from what they preach in the pulpit or on the lecture platform.

From Life Without Principle, continued

Perhaps I am more than usually jealous with respect to my freedom. I feel that my

connection with and obligation to society are still very slight and transient. Those slight labors which afford me a livelihood, and by which it is allowed that I am to some extent serviceable to my contemporaries, are as yet commonly a pleasure to me, and I am not often reminded that they are a necessity. So far I am successful. But I foresee that if my wants should be much increased, the labor required to supply them would become a drudgery. If I should sell both my forenoons and afternoons to society, as most appear to do, I am sure that for me there would be nothing left worth living for. I trust that I shall never thus sell my birthright for a mess of pottage. I wish to suggest that a man may be very industrious, and yet not spend his time well. There is no more fatal blunderer than he who consumes the greater part of his life getting his living. All great enterprises are self-supporting. The poet, for instance, must sustain his body by his poetry, as a steam planing-mill feeds its boilers with the shavings it makes. You must get your living by loving. But as it is said of the merchants that ninety-seven in a hundred fail, so the life of men generally, tried by this standard, is a failure, and bankruptcy may be surely prophesied.

Merely to come into the world the heir of a fortune is not to be born, but to be stillborn, rather. To be supported by the charity of friends, or a government-pension, —provided you continue to breathe,—by whatever fine synonyms you describe these relations, is to go into the almshouse. On Sundays the poor debtor goes to church to take an account of stock, and finds, of course, that his outgoes have been greater than his income. In the Catholic Church, especially, they go into chancery, make a clean confession, give up all, and think to start again. Thus men will lie on their backs, talking about the fall of man, and never make an effort to get up.

As for the comparative demand which men make on life, it is an important difference between two, that the one is satisfied with a level success, that his marks can all be hit by point-blank shots, but the other, however low and unsuccessful his life may be, constantly elevates his aim, though at a very slight angle to the horizon. I should much rather be the last man,—though, as the Orientals say, "Greatness doth not approach him who is forever looking down; and all those who are looking high are growing poor."

It is remarkable that there is little or nothing to be remembered written on the subject of getting a living; how to make getting a living not merely honest and honorable, but altogether inviting and glorious; for if *getting* a living is not so, then living is not. One would think, from looking at literature, that this question had never disturbed a solitary individual's musings. Is it that men are too much disgusted with their experience to speak of it? The lesson of value which money teaches, which the Author of the Universe[1] has taken so much pains to teach us, we are inclined to skip altogether. As for the means of living, it is wonderful how indifferent men of all classes are about it, even reformers, so called,—whether they inherit, or earn, or steal it. I think that Society has done nothing for us in this respect, or at least has undone what she has done. Cold and hunger seem more friendly to my nature than those methods which men have adopted and advise to ward them off.

The title *wise* is, for the most part, falsely applied. How can one be a wise man, if he does not know any better how to live than other men?—if he is only more

1. Author of the Universe—God

cunning and intellectually subtle? Does Wisdom work in a treadmill? or does she teach how to succeed *by her example?* Is there any such thing as wisdom not applied to life? Is she merely the miller who grinds the finest logic? It is pertinent to ask if Plato got his *living* in a better way or more successfully than his contemporaries,—or did he succumb to the difficulties of life like other men? Did he seem to prevail over some of them merely by indifference, or by assuming grand airs? or find it easier to live, because his aunt remembered him in her will? The ways in which most men get their living, that is, live, are mere make-shifts, and a shirking of the real business of life,—chiefly because they do not know, but partly because they do not mean, any better.

The rush to California, for instance, and the attitude, not merely of merchants, but of philosophers and prophets, so called, in relation to it, reflect the greatest disgrace on mankind. That so many are ready to live by luck, and so get the means of commanding the labor of others less lucky, without contributing any value to society! And that is called enterprise! I know of no more startling development of the immorality of trade, and all the common modes of getting a living. The philosophy and poetry and religion of such a mankind are not worth the dust of a puff-ball. The hog that gets his living by rooting, stirring up the soil so, would be ashamed of such company. If I could command the wealth of all the worlds by lifting my finger, I would not pay *such* a price for it. Even Mahomet knew that God did not make this world in jest. It makes God to be a moneyed gentleman who scatters a handful of pennies in order to see mankind scramble for them. The world's raffle! A subsistence in the domains of Nature a thing to be raffled for! What a comment, what a satire, on our institutions! The conclusion will be, that mankind will hang itself upon a tree. And have all the precepts in all the Bibles taught men only this? and is the last and most admirable invention of the human race only an improved muck-rake? Is this the ground on which Orientals and Occidentals meet? Did God direct us so to get our living, digging where we never planted,—and He would, perchance, reward us with lumps of gold?

God gave the righteous man a certificate entitling him to food and raiment, but the unrighteous man found a facsimile of the same in God's coffers, and appropiated it, and obtained food and raiment like the former. It is one of the most extensive systems of counterfeiting that the world has seen. I did not know that mankind was suffering for want of gold. I have seen a little of it. I know that it is very malleable, but not so malleable as wit. A grain of gold will gild a great surface, but not so much as a grain of wisdom.

The gold-digger in the ravines of the mountains is as much a gambler as his fellow in the saloons of San Francisco. What difference does it make whether you shake dirt or shake dice? If you win, society is the loser. The gold-digger is the enemy of the honest laborer, whatever checks and compensations there may be. It is not enough to tell me that you worked hard to get your gold. So does the Devil work hard. The way of transgressors may be hard in many respects. The humblest observer who goes to the mines sees and says that gold-digging is of the character of a lottery; the gold thus obtained is not the same thing with the wages of honest toil. But, practically, he forgets what he has seen, for he has seen only the act, not the principle, and goes into trade there, that is, buys a ticket in what proves another lottery, where the fact is not so obvious. . .

SELECTION II

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Thoreau denied that he was a reformer. What is the difference between a reformer and a philosopher? What is the basis for Thoreau's contention that working merely for money is undignified?

2. Do you agree with Thoreau that work should be pleasurable and not drudgery? Explain your answer.

3. How can a very industrious man be a "fatal blunderer?"

4. Can you give a definition of Wisdom which would probably satisfy Thoreau?

5. What kind of labor would Thoreau feel contributes to society?

6. What is Thoreau's opinion of people who live on inherited wealth or on money from charity or a pension? Is his opinion justified? Explain your answer.

7. Why does the author find it strange that nothing has been written on the subject of getting a living?

8. How, according to Thoreau, is the hunting of gold like gambling? What is his attitude toward gambling?

9. What do you think makes the writings of Thoreau popular today?

10. Write a short paragraph in which you explain what the following quotes from Thoreau mean to you.

(a) "The title wise is, for the most part, falsely applied. How can one be a wise man, if he does not know any better how to live than other men?—if he is only more cunning and intellectually subtle?"

(b) "Greatness doth not approach him who is forever looking down, and all those who are looking high are growing poor."

(c) "I wish to suggest that a man may be very industrious, and yet not spend his time well. There is no more fatal blunderer than he who consumes the greater part of his life getting his living."

(d) "Do not hire a man who does your work for money, but him who does it for love of it."

(e) "You must get your living by loving."

CHAPTER X

HERMAN MELVILLE

HERMAN MELVILLE (1819-1891).

"It is with fiction as with religion. It should present another world, and yet one to which we feel the tie.

. . .

"There is no faith, and no stoicism, and no philosophy, that a mortal man can possibly evoke, which will stand the final test in a real impassioned onset of Life and Passion. Faith and philosophy are air, but events are brass."

—from his *Pierre*

Melville (1819-1891) was born in New York City. Though both his parents came from well-to-do families, a family business failure and, soon after, the death of his father made it necessary for him to leave school at the age of 15. He worked as a clerk, a farmer and a teacher, before becoming a cabin boy on a ship.

His shipboard experience served as the basis for a semiautobiographical novel, *Redburn*, concerning the sufferings of a genteel youth among brutal sailors. This theme of a youth confronted by realities and evils for which he is unprepared is a prominent one in Melville's works. Though based on Melville's experiences, the hero of the novel was more callow and unhappy than Melville himself was, for the sailing experience also gave him a love of the sea, and aroused his desire for adventure.

In 1841 Melville went to the South Seas on a whaling ship, where he gained the information about whaling that he later used in *Moby-Dick*. After jumping ship in the Marquesa Islands, he and a friend were captured by some of the islanders. They lived with these people for a month, then escaped on an Australian ship, deserting the latter in Tahiti, where they worked for a time as field laborers. Melville finally returned to the United States as a seaman on an American ship. These experiences provided material for his first and most popular books, which are primarily adventure stories.

In 1850 Melville moved to a farm in Massachusetts where Nathaniel Hawthorne was his neighbor. The latter soon became a confidant with whom Melville often discussed his work. As he changed from writing adventure stories to philo-

sophical and symbolic works, Melville's popularity began to wane. From the writing of complex novels such as *Moby-Dick*, *Pierre*, and *The Confidence Man*, Melville turned to writing poetry. But unable to support himself by his writing, he secured a political appointment as a customs inspector in New York. When he retired from that job, after 20 years, he wrote the novelette, *Billy Budd*, completing it just before his death. It was not until the 1920s that his work again came to the attention of literary scholars and the public. His reputation now rests not only on his rich, poetic prose, but also on his philosophy and his effective use of symbolism.

Melville composed the first American prose epic, *Moby-Dick*. (An epic is generally a long poem on an important theme.) Although *Moby-Dick* is presented in the form of a novel, at times it seems like a prose poem. It is difficult to read for two reasons. Much of the talk in the novel is sailor talk, and much of the language is purposely old-fashioned, for effect. This technique of Melville's style was inspired by the great authors of Elizabethan England.

The plot of *Moby-Dick* deals with the ceaseless conflicts between good and evil, of nature's indifference to man "visibly personified and made practically assailable." Melville makes this conflict live for us not by putting it into simple statements but by using symbols—that is, objects or persons who represent something else. The white whale, Moby-Dick, symbolizes nature for Melville, for it is complex, unknowable and dangerous. For the character Ahab, however, the whale represents only evil. The prime symbol of good is the first mate of the ship *Pequod*, a man named Starbuck. And the prime symbol of the good that is destroyed by evil—and in this case is destroyed by a consuming desire to root out evil—is the captain of the *Pequod*, Ahab. A man with an overwhelming obsession to kill the whale which had crippled him, he is Melville's greatest creation. He burns with a baleful fire, becoming evil himself in his thirst to destroy evil.

SELECTION I

In the two excerpts given here, the great chase is ending and we are close to the conclusion of the book. The **Pequod** has finally sighted Moby-Dick. The boats have been lowered in pursuit of the whale, which has already smashed two of them.

From Moby-Dick

Chapter 84

Whether fagged by the three days' running chase, and the resistance to his swimming in the knotted hamper he bore; or whether it was some latent deceitfulness and malice in him: whichever was true, the White Whale's way now began to abate, as it seemed, from the boat so rapidly nearing him once more; though indeed the whale's last start had not been so long a one as before. And still as Ahab glided over the waves the unpitying sharks accompanied him; and so pertinaciously stuck to the boat; and so continually bit at the plying oars, that the blades became jagged and crunched, and left small splinters in the sea, at almost every dip.

"Heed them not! those teeth but give new rowlocks to your oars. Pull on! 'tis the better rest, the sharks' jaw than the yielding water."

"But at every bite, sir, the thin blades grow smaller and smaller!"

"They will last long enough! pull on! —But who can tell"—he muttered—"whether these sharks swim to feast on the whale or on Ahab?—But pull on! Aye, all

alive, now—we near him. The helm! take the helm! let me pass."—and so saying, two of the oarsmen helped him forward to the bows, of the still flying boat.

At length as the craft was cast to one side, and ran ranging along with the White Whale's flank, he seemed strangely oblivious of its advance—as the whale sometimes will—and Ahab was fairly within the smoky mountain mist, which, thrown off from the whale's spout, curled round his great Monadnock[1] hump; he was even thus close to him; when, with body arched back both arms lengthwise high-lifted to the poise, he darted his fierce iron, and his far fiercer curse into the hated whale. As both steel and curse sank to the socket, as if sucked into a morass, Moby Dick sidewise writhed; spasmodically rolled his nigh flank against the bow, and, without staving a hole in it, so suddenly canted the boat over, that had it not been for the elevated part of the gunwale to which he then clung, Ahab would once more have been tossed into the sea. As it was, three of the oarsmen—who foreknew not the precise instant of the dart, and were therefore unprepared for its effects—these were flung out; but so fell, that, in an instant two of them clutched the gunwale again, and rising to its level in a combing wave, hurled themselves bodily inboard again; the third man helplessly dropping astern, but still afloat and swimming.

Almost simultaneously, with a mighty volition of ungraduated, instantaneous swiftness, the White Whale darted through the weltering sea. But when Ahab cried out to the steersman to take new turns with the line, and hold it so; and commanded the crew to turn round on their seats, and tow the boat up to the mark; the moment the treacherous line felt that double strain and tug, it snapped in the empty air!

"What breaks in me? Some sinew cracks!—'tis whole again; oars! oars! Burst in upon him!"

Hearing the tremendous rush of the sea-crashing boat, the whale wheeled round to present his blank forehead at bay; but in that evolution, catching sight of the nearing black hull of the ship; seemingly seeing in it the source of all his persecutions; bethinking it—it may be—a larger and nobler foe; of a sudden, he bore down upon its advancing prow, smiting his jaws amid fiery showers of foam.

Ahab staggered; his hand smote his forehead. "I grow blind; hands! stretch out before me that I may yet grope my way. Is't night?"

"The whale! The ship!" cried the cringing oarsmen.

"Oars! oars! Slope downwards to thy depths, O sea that ere it be for ever too late, Ahab may slide this last, last time upon his mark! I see; the ship! the ship! Dash on, my men! will ye not save my ship?"

But as the oarsmen violently forced their boat through the sledge-hammering seas, the before whale-smitten bowends of two planks burst through, and in an instant almost, the temporarily disabled boat lay nearly level with the waves; its half-wading, splashing crew, trying hard to stop the gap and bale out the pouring water. . .

1. Monadnock—a mountain or rocky mass that has resisted erosion and stands isolated in a plain; taken from the name Mount Monadnock, an isolated peak in the state of New Hampshire.

SELECTION I

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The men in Ahab's boat were in constant danger of death from three sources. What were they?
2. If men had to die, which death would Ahab prefer?
3. Ahab's boat approached Moby Dick's side and Ahab was soon standing "in a smoky mountain mist." What was this mist?
4. What happened after Ahab sent his harpoon into Moby Dick's body?
5. What does Ahab mean by "I grow blind: is I night?"
6. How did the men try to escape the charging whale?
7. How good is Melville at describing action?
8. Is there any notable literature in your country about the sea? If so, what are the most commonly used themes?

SELECTION II

In this second excerpt the characters not named before are from the **Pequod:** Stubb, the second mate, and Tashtego, the Indian harpooner with his symbolic hammer. Ahab kills the white whale but all the human beings involved, except the narrator, die in the process. At the end only nature, symbolized by the sea, remains, moving but unmoved.

From Moby-Dick

Chapter 84, *concluded*

Meantime, for that one beholding instant, Tashtego's mast-head hammer remained suspended in his hand; and the red flag, half-wrapping him as with a plaid, then streamed itself straight out from him, as his own forward-flowing heart; while Starbuck and Stubb, standing upon the bowsprit beneath, caught sight of the down-coming monster just as soon as he.

"The whale, the whale! Up helm, up helm! Oh, all ye sweet powers of air, now hug me close! Let not Starbuck die, if die he must, in a woman's fainting fit. Up helm, I say—ye fools, the jaw! the jaw! Is this the end of all my bursting prayers? all my life-long fidelities? Ah, Ahab, Ahab, lo, thy work. Steady! helmsman, steady. Nay, Nay! Up helm again! He turns to meet us! Oh, his unappeasable brow drives on towards one, whose duty tells him he cannot depart. My God, stand by me now!"

"Stand not by me, but stand under me, whoever you are that will now help Stubb; for Stubb, too, sticks here. I grin at thee, thou grinning whale! Who ever helped Stubb, or kept Stubb awake, but Stubb's own unwinking eye? And now poor Stubb goes to bed upon a mattress that is all too soft; would it were stuffed with brushwood! I grin at thee, thou grinning whale! Look ye, sun, moon, and stars! I call ye assassins of as good a fellow as ever spouted up his ghost. For all that, I would yet ring glasses with thee, would ye but hand the cup! Oh, oh, oh, oh! thou grinning whale, but there'll be plenty of gulping soon! Why fly ye not, O Ahab! For me, off shoes and jacket to it; let Stubb die in his drawers! A most mouldy and over salted death, though;—cherries! cherries! cherries! Oh, Flask, for one red cherry ere we die!"

"Cherries? I only wish that we were where they grow. Oh, Stubb, I hope my poor mother's drawn my part-pay ere this;

if not, few coppers will now come to her, for the voyage is up."

From the ship's bows, nearly all the seamen now hung inactive; hammers, bits of plank, lances, and harpoons, mechanically retained in their hands, just as they had darted from their various employments; all their enchanted eyes intent upon the whale, which from side to side strangely vibrating his predestinating head, sent a broad band of over spreading semicircular foam before him as he rushed. Retribution, swift vengeance, eternal malice were in his whole aspects, and spite of all that mortal man could do, the solid white buttress of his forehead smote the ship's starboard bow, till men and timbers reeled. Some fell flat upon their faces. Like dislodged tricks, the heads of the harpooners aloft shook on their bull-like necks. Through the breach, they heard the waters pour, as mountain torrents down a flume.

"The ship! The hearse!—the second hearse!" cried Ahab from the boat; "its wood could only be American!"

Diving beneath the settling ship, the whale ran quivering along its keel; but turning under water, swiftly shot to the surface again, far off the other bow, but within a few yards of Ahab's boat, where, for a time, he lay quiescent.

"I turn my body from the sun. What ho, Tashtego! let me hear thy hammer. Oh! ye three unsurrendered spires of mine; thou uncracked keel; and only god-bullied hull; thou firm deck, and haughty helm, and Pole-pointed prow,—death-glorious ship! must ye then perish, and without me? Am I cut off from the last fond pride of meanest ship-wrecked captains? Oh, lonely death on lonely life! Oh, now I feel my topmost greatness lies in my topmost grief. Ho, ho! from all your furthest bounds, pour ye now in, ye bold billows of my whole foregone life, and top this one piled comber of my death! Towards thee I roll, thou all-destroying but unconquering whale; to the last I grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee. Sink all coffins and all hearses to one common pool! and since neither can be mine, let me then tow to pieces, while still chasing thee though tied to thee, thou damned whale! *Thus*, I give up the spear!"

The harpoon was darted; the stricken whale flew forward; with igniting velocity the line ran through the grooves;—ran foul. Ahab stooped to clear it; he did clear it; but the flying turn caught him round the neck, and voicelessly as Turkish mutes bowstring their victim, he was shot out of the boat, ere the crew knew he was gone. Next instant, the heavy eye-splice in the rope's final end flew out of the stark-empty tub, knocked down an oarsman, and smiting the sea, disappeared in its depths.

For an instant, the tranced boat's crew stood still; then turned. "The ship? Great God, where is the ship?" Soon they through dim, bewildering mediums saw her sidelong fading phantom, as in the gaseous Fata Morgana, only the uppermost masts out of water; while fixed by infatuation, or fidelity, or fate, to their once lofty perches, the pagan harpooners still maintained their sinking look-outs on the sea. And now, concentric circles seized the lone boat itself, and all its crew, and each floating oar, and every lance-pole, and spinning, animate and inanimate, all round and round in one vortex, carried the smallest chip of the Pequod out of sight.

But as the last whelmings intermixingly poured themselves over the sunken head of the Indian at the mainmast, leaving a few inches of the erect spar yet visible, to-

gether with long streaming yards of the flag, which calmly undulated, with ironical coincidings, over the destroying billows they almost touched;—at that instant, a red arm and a hammer hovered backwardly uplifted in the open air, in the act of nailing the flag faster and yet faster to the subsiding spar. A skyhawk that tauntingly had followed the main-truck downwards from its natural home among the stars, pecking at the flag, and incommoding Tashtego there; this bird now chanced to intercept its broad fluttering wing between the hammer and the wood; and simultaneously feeling that ethereal thrill, the submerged savage beneath, in his death-gasp, kept his hammer frozen there; and so the bird of heaven, with archangelic shrieks, and his imperial beak thrust upwards, and his whole captive form folded in the flag of Ahab, went down with his ship, which, like Satan, would not sink to hell till she had dragged a living part of heaven along with her, and helmeted herself with it.

Now small fowls flew screaming over the yet yawning gulf; a sullen white surf beat against its steep sides; then all collapsed, and the great shroud of the sea rolled on as it rolled 5,000 years ago.

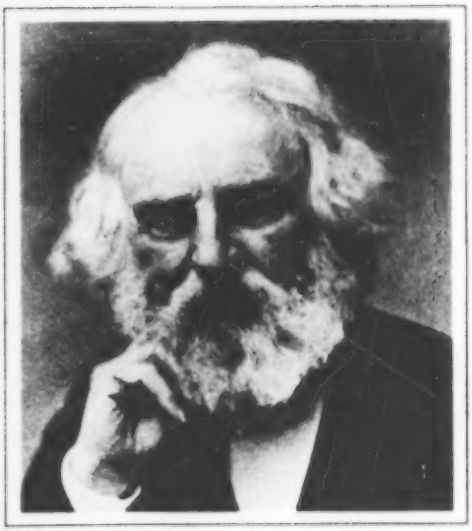
SELECTION II

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the meaning of Ahab's cry, "Am I cut off from the last fond pride of meanest shipwrecked captains? Oh, lonely death on lonely life!"?
2. What acts of courage do you find in this excerpt?
3. How does Ahab die?
4. Melville's ability to describe action is excellent. He presents frozen moments of action and stark realism. Cite some examples.
5. What happened to the larger ship?
6. What is the symbolism of the bird caught between Tashtego's hammer and the sinking flag?
7. What is the effect of the ending on the reader?
8. In some ways Melville wrote his novel not only like an epic but like a play. Can you find any similarities to a play in this excerpt?
9. To make Ahab a titanic character, Melville has him talk differently from the other characters. His language style is almost Elizabethan in character. Does this add to the effectiveness of the story? Give your reasons.
10. Was Ahab an evil man? Explain.

CHAPTER XI

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW



HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW
(1807-1882)

"True poets embody and give form to the fine thoughts which are passing through their own minds; but these men, like mere painters, only animate those forms, which have long existed in every one's fancy."

—from his "Poets and Common Sense Men"

"True greatness is the greatness of the mind —the true glory of a nation is a moral and intellectual preeminence."

—from his Works

Longfellow (1807-1882) was born in Maine, but lived most of his adult life in Cambridge, the village outside Boston where many writers lived. One of Longfellow's grandfathers was a state Senator and the other grandfather had been a Revolutionary War general and a Congressman. Longfellow's family also expected him to choose a career of public service, as well as to support himself in some profession. Following his graduation in 1826 from Bowdoin College, where he was a classmate of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Longfellow went to Europe to study. When he returned to the United States three years later, he taught European languages, first at Bowdoin and then at Harvard. For a number of years, though his poetry was quite popular, Longfellow continued to earn his living by teaching, but after 18 years of teaching at Harvard, he resigned his position because he felt it interfered with his writing.

During the last years of his life, Longfellow received many honors, including honorary degrees from Cambridge and Oxford Universities in England. After his death, a bust of Longfellow was placed in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey —the first American to be so honored.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow brought European culture to the attention of Americans, and in turn spread American folklore in Europe, where his work was popular. American readers liked Longfellow's lyrical style, which was influenced by the German Romantic poets, and they were pleased by his emphasis on such subjects as home, family, nature, and religion. His style and subjects were conventional, especially in comparison with Whitman or more modern writers, and over the years

Longfellow's position as a major American poet has declined. Nevertheless, in the late 19th century, Longfellow was without a doubt the most popular American poet.

Of the three poems given here, "Hymn to the Night" has a dignity proper for its mood and message. "The Secret of the Sea" uses flowing rhythm to express a longing many have felt. "Oft Have I Seen at Some Cathedral Door" is a sonnet which introduced a section of his translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. This sonnet is among Longfellow's most enduring works.

Selection I

HYMN TO THE NIGHT

I heard the trailing garments of the Night
Sweep through her marble halls!
I saw her sable skirts all fringed with light
From the celestial walls!

I felt her presence, by its spell of might,
Stoop o'er me from above;
The calm, majestic presence of the Night,
As of the one I love.

I heard the sounds of sorrow and delight,
The manifold, soft chimes,
That fill the haunted chambers of the Night,
Like some old poet's rhymes.

From the cool cisterns of the midnight air
My spirit drank repose;
The fountain of perpetual peace flows there,—
From those deep cisterns flows.

O holy Night! from thee I learn to bear
What man has borne before!
Thou layest thy finger on the lips of Care,
And they complain no more.

Peace! Peace! Orestes[1]-like I breathe this prayer!
Descend with broad-winged flight,
The welcome, the thrice-prayed for, the most
fair,
The best-beloved Night!

1. Orestes—In Greek mythology, the only son of Clytemnestra and Agamemnon, who killed his mother and her lover because they had killed his father. He prayed to the goddess Athena for peace from the pursuit of the Furies after his crime.

Selection II

THE SECRET OF THE SEA

Ah! what pleasant visions haunt me
  As I gaze upon the sea!
All the old romantic legends,
  All my dreams, come back to me.

Sails of silk and ropes of sendal,
  Such as gleam in ancient lore;
And the singing of the sailors,
  And the answer from the shore!

Most of all, the Spanish ballad
  Haunts me oft, and tarries long,
Of the noble Count Arnaldos
  And the sailor's mystic song.

Like the long waves on a sea-beach,
  Where the sand as silver shines,
With a soft, monotonous cadence,
  Flow its unrhymed lyric lines;—

Telling how the Count Arnaldos,
  With his hawk upon his hand,
Saw a fair and stately galley,
  Steering onward to the land;—

How he heard the ancient helmsman
  Chant a song so wild and clear,
That the sailing sea-bird slowly
  Poised upon the mast to hear,

Till his soul was full of longing,
  And he cried, with impulse strong,—
"Helmsman! for the love of heaven,
  Teach me, too, that wondrous song!"

"Wouldst thou,"—so the helmsman answered,
  "Learn the secret of the sea?
Only those who brave its dangers
  Comprehend its mystery!"

81

In each sail that skims the horizon,
  In each landward-blowing breeze,
I behold that stately galley,
  Hear those mournful melodies;

Till my soul is full of longing
  For the secret of the sea,
And the heart of the great ocean
  Sends a thrilling pulse through me.

Selection III

FROM DIVINA COMMEDIA

I

Oft have I seen at some cathedral door
  A laborer, pausing in the dust and heat,
  Lay down his burden, and with reverent feet
  Enter, and cross himself, and on the floor
Kneel to repeat his paternoster[1] o'er;
  Far off the noises of the world retreat;
  The loud vociferations of the street
  Become an undistinguishable roar.
So, as I enter here from day to day,
  And leave my burden at this minster gate,
  Kneeling in prayer, and not ashamed to pray,
The tumult of the time disconsolate
  To inarticulate murmurs dies away,
  While the eternal ages watch and wait.

1. paternoster—The Lord's Prayer, so called because the opening words in Latin are "Pater Noster."

SELECTIONS I, II and III

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Hymn To The Night

1. How does the poet personify the Night? Why does he welcome her? What does he learn from her?

The Secret Of The Sea

1. What kind of thoughts and associations does the sea bring to the poet?
2. According to the helmsman, how can one learn the secret of the sea? Do you have any ideas what the secret might be?

Divina Commedia

1. What ambience does the poet strive to convey in the first eight lines?
2. In the last six lines, the poet draws a comparison between himself and the other worshiper. Why is he also a laborer? What burden does the poet leave?
3. What is the meaning of the last line? What attitude toward life does it reveal?

CHAPTER XII

WALT WHITMAN

WALT WHITMAN (1819-1892)

Without yielding an inch the working-man and working-woman were to be in my pages from first to last. The ranges of heroism and loftiness with which Greek and feudal poets endow'd their godlike or lordly born characters—indeed prouder and better based and with fuller ranges than those—I was to endow the democratic averages of America. I was to show that we, here and to-day, are eligible to the grandest and the best—more eligible now than any times of old were. I will also want my utterances (I said to myself before beginning) to be in spirit the poems of the morning. (They have been founded and mainly written in the sunny forenoon and early midday of my life.) I will want them to be the poems of women entirely as much as men. I have wished to put the complete Union of the States in my songs without any preference or partiality whatever. Henceforth, if they live and are read, it must be just as much South as North—just as much along the Pacific as Atlantic—in the valley of the Mississippi, in Canada, up in Maine, down in Texas, and on the shores of Puget Sound.

—from the Preface to the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass*

Whitman (1819-1892) was one of the great innovators in American literature. In the cluster of poems he called *Leaves of Grass* he gave America its first genuine epic poem. The poetic style he devised is now called free verse—that is, poetry without a fixed beat or regular rhyme scheme. Whitman thought that the voice of democracy should not be haltered by traditional forms of verse. His influence on the poetic technique of other writers was small during the time he was writing *Leaves of Grass* but today elements of his style are apparent in the work of many poets. During the 20th century, poets as different as Carl Sandburg and the "Beat" bard, Allen Ginsberg, have owed something to him.

Whitman grew up in Brooklyn, New York, and worked there as a schoolteacher, as an apprentice to a printer, and as the editor of various newspapers. He had very little schooling but read a great deal on his own. He was especially intrigued by the works of Shakespeare and Milton. Strangely enough, his only contact with the Eastern religions or with German Transcendentalists, whose ideas he frequently used in his poetry, was what he had read of them in the writings of Emerson.

In the 1840s Whitman supported Jackson's Democratic party; he also favored the exclusion of slavery from new states in his newspaper writing and because of this, in 1848, he was dismissed from his job. He then worked sporadically at carpentry and odd jobs, and had some of his writing—which was conventional and undistinguished—printed in newspapers.

In 1848 he visited New Orleans, Chicago, and the Western frontier; the lat-

ter impressed him greatly. There is speculation that some of his experiences on this trip marked a turning point in his career, though it is more likely that he was gradually developing as an artist. At any rate, soon after this period he began to write in a new style—the "free verse" for which he became famous. He published the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* in 1855, setting the type for the book himself, and writing favorable reviews of it in the papers, anonymously. He continued to add new poems to the collection, and to rearrange and revise them, until his death in 1892. His best work is usually considered to have been done before 1871.

Most of the poems in *Leaves of Grass* are about man and nature. However, a small number of very good poems deal with New York, the city that fascinated Whitman, and with the Civil War, in which he served as a volunteer male nurse. In his poetry, Whitman combined the ideal of the democratic common man and that of the rugged individual. He envisioned the poet as a hero, a savior and a prophet, one who leads the community by his expressions of the truth.

With the publication of *Leaves of Grass* Whitman was praised by Ralph Waldo Emerson and a few other literati but was attacked by the majority of critics because of his unconventional style. He wanted his poetry to be for the common people but, ironically, it was ignored by the general public.

PART A

Three individual lyrics from *Leaves of Grass* are given in the first of this chapter. In "There Was a Child Went Forth" we see Whitman in the process of absorbing the world into himself. In "I Hear America Singing" we see him listening to the concert of his fellow Americans. In "Give Me the Splendid Silent Sun" he makes a brilliant turnabout: first he hymns the glories of nature and the rustic life and then rejects them in favor of the crowded life of the city.

Selection 1

THERE WAS A CHILD WENT FORTH

There was a child went forth every day,
And the first object he look'd upon, that object he became,
And that object became part of him for the day or a certain part of the day,
Or for many or stretching cycles of years.

The early lilacs became part of this child,
And grass and white and red morning-glories, and white and red clover, and the song of the phoebe-bird,
And the Third-month lambs and the sow's pink-faint litter, and the mare's foal and the cow's calf,
And the noisy brood of the barnyard or by the mire of the pond-side,
And the fish suspending themselves so curiously below there, and the beautiful curious liquid,
And the water-plants with their graceful flat heads, all became part of him.

The field-sprouts of Fourth-month and Fifth-month became part of him.
Winter-grain sprouts and those of the light-yellow corn, and the esculent roots of the garden,
And the apple-trees cover'd with blossoms and the fruit afterward, and wood-berries, and the commonest weeds by the road,
And the old drunkard staggering home from the outhouse of the tavern whence he had lately risen,

85

And the schoolmistress that pass'd on her way to the school,
And the friendly boys that pass'd, and the quarrelsome boys,
And the tidy and fresh-cheek'd girls, and the barefoot Negro boy and girl,
And all the changes of city and country wherever he went.

His own parents, he that had father'd him and she that had conceiv'd him in her womb and birth'd him,
They gave this child more of themselves than that,
They gave him afterward every day, they became part of him.

The mother at home quietly placing the dishes on the suppertable,
The mother with mild words, clean her cap and gown, a wholesome odor falling off her person and clothes as she walks by,
The father, strong, self-sufficient, manly, mean, anger'd unjust,
The blow, the quick loud word, the tight bargain, the crafty lure,
The family usages, the language, the company, the furniture, the yearning and swelling heart,
Affection that will not be gainsay'd, the sense of what is real, the thought if after all it should prove unreal,
The doubts of day-time and the doubts of night-time, the curious whether and how,
Whether that which appears so is so, or is it all flashes and specks?
Men and women crowding fast in the streets, if they are not flashes and specks what are they?
The streets themselves and the facades of houses, and goods in the windows,
Vehicles, teams, the heavy-plank'd wharves, the huge crossing at the ferries,
The village on the highland seen from afar at sunset, the river between,
Shadows, aureola and mist, the light falling on roofs and gables of white or brown two miles off,

The schooner near by sleepily dropping down the tide, the little boat slack-tow'd astern,
The hurrying tumbling waves, quick-broken crests, slapping,
The strata of color'd clouds, the long bar of maroon-tint away solitary by itself, the spread of purity it lies motionless in,
The horizon's edge, the flying sea-crow, the fragrance of salt marsh and shore mud,
These became part of that child who went forth every day, and who now goes, and will always go forth every day.

Selection II

I HEAR AMERICA SINGING

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe and strong,
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work,
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the deck-hand singing on the steamboat deck,

The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing as he stands,
The wood-cutter's song, the plowboy's on his way in the morning, or at noon intermission or at sundown,

The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at work, or of the girl sewing or washing,
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,
The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of young fellows, robust, friendly,
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

Selection III

GIVE ME THE SPLENDID SILENT SUN

I

Give me the splendid silent sun with all his beams full-dazzling,
Give me juicy autumnal fruit ripe and red from the orchard,
Give me a field where the unmow'd grass grows,
Give me an arbor, give me the trellis'd grape,
Give me fresh corn and wheat, give me serene-moving animals teaching content,
Give me nights perfectly quiet as on high plateaus west of the Mississippi, and I looking up at the stars,
Give me odorous at sunrise a garden of beautiful flowers where I can walk undisturb'd,
Give me for marriage a sweet-breath'd woman of whom I should never tire,
Give me a perfect child, give me away aside from the noise of the world a rural domestic life,
Give me to warble spontaneous songs recluse by myself, for my own ears only,
Give me solitude, give me Nature, give me again O Nature your primal sanities!
These demanding to have them, (tired with ceaseless excitement, and rack'd by the war-strife,)
These to procure incessantly asking, rising in cries from my heart,
While yet incessantly asking still I adhere to my city,
Day upon day and year upon year O city, walking your streets,
Where you hold me enchain'd a certain time refusing to give me up,
Yet giving to make me glutted, enrich'd of soul, you give me forever faces;
(O I see what I sought to escape, confronting, reversing my cries,
I see my own soul trampling down what it ask'd for.)

II

Keep your splendid silent sun,
Keep your woods O Nature, and the quiet places by the woods,
Keep your fields of clover and timothy, and your corn-fields, and orchards,
Keep the blossoming buckwheat fields where the Ninth-month bees hum;
Give me faces and streets—give me these phantoms incessant and endless along the trottoirs!
Give me interminable eyes—give me women—give me comrades and lovers by the thousand!
Let me see new ones every day!—let me hold new ones by the hand everyday!
Give me such shows—give me the streets of Manhattan!
Give me Broadway,[1] with the soldiers marching—give me the sound of the trumpets and drums!

1. Broadway—a street in New York City, famous for its theaters.

87

(The soldiers in companies or regiments —some starting away, flush'd and reckless,

Some, their time up, returning with thinn'd ranks, young, yet very old, worn, marching, noticing nothing;)

Give me the shores and wharves heavy-fringed with black ships!

O such for me! O an intense life, full to repletion and varied!

The life of the theatre, bar-room, huge hotel, for me!

The saloon of the the steamer! the crowded excursion for me! the torch-light procession!

The dense brigade bound for the war, with high piled military wagons following;

People, endless, streaming, with strong voices, passions, pageants,

Manhattan streets with their powerful throbs, with beating drums as now,

The endless and noisy chorus, the rustle and clank of muskets, (even the sight of the wounded,)

Manhattan crowds, with their turbulent musical chorus!

Manhattan faces and eyes forever for me.

SELECTIONS I, II, and III

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, Part A

There Was a Child Went Forth

1. The poem describes the influences of environment on the child, and the poet divides these influences into the animal and vegetable world of nature and the human world of the home. Which influences do you think were the most lasting? Why?

2. Does the poet seem to feel that nature has any bad influences?

3. What are the good and bad influences of the home?

4. Which do you think has greater influence on the life of a person, heredity or environment? Give your reasons.

I Hear America Singing

1. How many different singers does Whitman hear?

2. What do the songs represent?

3. Does the poem have anything to say about happiness? If so, what?

4. How does this poem reflect the poet's faith in democracy and the people?

5. What other types of workers would you have to add to Whitman's picture to bring it up to date?

Give Me the Splendid Silent Sun

1. Why does the poet name his poem as he does? What pleasures and rewards does the sun represent?

2. How do you interpret lines 18 and 19?

3. What does the poet mean by "Keep your splendid silent sun"?

4. What are the satisfactions the poet gets from Manhattan? Which does he mention more often, people or things? What would you select if you had to choose between the two kinds of life presented in the poem? Why?

5. This poem was written in the last months of the American Civil War. What reminders of the war does the speaker see in the streets of Manhattan? How does he contrast soldiers on the way to battle with those who are returning?

6. The poet is torn between two different kinds of life. Unable to tear himself away from his present life, he nevertheless yearns for a very different one. Do you think this is a common human experience? Explain.

PART B

This second group of poems from *Leaves of Grass* tells us something further about Whitman and his genius. "I Hear It Was Charged Against Me" is especially interesting nowadays when in many parts of the world young rebels are trying to tear down some of the institutions of society. He asserts that he himself is neither for nor against social institutions. He is indifferent to them. But he knows what he wants, a society based on love and affection that would not need rules or restrictions. He wants to start this society in every city.

Two of his Civil War poems are reprinted here. "Cavalry Crossing a Ford" is famous because it presents one striking, central image—as later many of Carl Sandburg's poems did. This short poem is like a realistic painting. The other Civil War poem is far different. It tells us about death in war and the shattering effect the very thought of a soldier's death has on his family.

The final poem given here is one of the last Whitman put into *Leaves of Grass*. Standing in a sublime Colorado canyon, he says that his poetry is like the stern scene he is watching. Critics have charged that his poetry is too rough and uncivilized. But he knows that the poetry he must write has the beauty, the natural unspoiled beauty, of the panorama before him.

Selection IV

I HEAR IT WAS CHARGED AGAINST ME

I hear it was charged against me that I sought to destroy institutions,
But really I am neither for nor against institutions,
(What indeed have I in common with them? or what with the destruction of them?)
Only I will establish in the Mannahatta[1]
and in every city of these States inland and seaboard,
And in the fields and woods, and above every keel little or large that dents the water,
Without edifices or rules or trustees or any argument,
The institution of the dear love of comrades.

Selection V

CAVALRY CROSSING A FORD

A line in long array where they wind betwixt green islands,
They take a serpentine course, their arms flash in the sun—hark to the musical clank,
Behold the silvery river, in it the splashing horses loitering stop to drink,
Behold the brown-faced men, each group, each person a picture, the negligent rest on the saddles,
Some emerge on the opposite bank, others are just entering the ford—while,
Scarlet and blue and snowy white,
The guidon flags flutter gayly in the wind.

Selection VI

COME UP FROM THE FIELDS FATHER

Come up from the fields father, here's a letter from our Pete,
And come to the front door mother, here's a letter from thy dear son.

1. Mannahatta—Manhattan, an island and a district within New York City, from the Indian name.

Lo, 'tis autumn,
Lo, where the trees, deeper green, yellower and redder,
Cool and sweeten Ohio's villages with leaves fluttering in the moderate wind,
Where apples ripe in the orchards hang and grapes on the trellis'd vines,
(Smell you the smell of the grapes on the vines?
Smell you the buckwheat where the bees were lately buzzing?)
Above all, lo, the sky so calm, so transparent after the rain, and with wondrous clouds,
Below too, all calm, all vital and beautiful, and the farm prospers well.

Down in the fields all prospers well,
But now from the fields come father, come at the daughter's call,
And come to the entry mother, to the front door come right away.

Fast as she can she hurries, something ominous, her steps trembling,
She does not tarry to smooth her hair nor adjust her cap.

Open the envelope quickly,
O this is not our son's writing, yet his name is sign'd,
O a strange hand writes for our dear son, O stricken mother's soul!
All swims before her eyes, flashes with black, she catches the main words only,
Sentences broken, *gunshot wound in the breast, cavalry skirmish, taken to hospital,*
At present low, but will soon be better.

Ah now the single figure to me,
Amid all teeming and wealthy Ohio with all its cities and farms,
Sickly white in the face and dull in the head, very faint,
By the jamb of a door leans.
Grieve not so, dear mother, (the just-grown daughter speaks through her sobs,
The little sisters huddle around speechless and dismay'd,)
See, dearest mother, the letter says Pete will soon be better.

Alas poor boy, he will never be better, (nor may he needs to be better, that brave and simple soul,)
While they stand at home at the door he is dead already,
The only son is dead.

But the mother needs to be better,
She with thin form presently dress'd in black,

By day her meals untouch'd, then at night fitfully sleeping often waking,
In the midnight waking, weeping, longing with one deep longing,
O that she might withdraw unnoticed, silent from life
escape and withdraw,
To follow, to seek, to be with her dear dead son.

Selection VII

SPIRIT THAT FORM'D THIS SCENE

Spirit that form'd this scene,
These tumbled rock-piles grim and red,

These reckless heaven-ambitious peaks,
These gorges, turbulent-clear streams, this naked freshness,
These formless wild arrays, for reasons of their own,
I know thee, savage spirit—we have communed together.
Mine too such wild arrays, for reasons of their own:
Was't charged against my chants they had forgotten art?
To fuse within themselves its rules precise and delicatesse?
The lyrist's measur'd beat, the wrought-out temple's grace
—column and polish'd arch forgot?
But thou that revelest here—spirit that form'd this scene,
They have remember'd thee.

SELECTIONS IV, V, VI, and VII

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, Part B

I Hear It Was Charged Against Me

A. 1. What meaning does the poet give to the words *institutions*?
2. What charge is the poet answering?
3. Is he guilty as charged? What is his attitude toward institutions?
4. What kind of institution does he want to establish?
5. In what ways will it be different from other institutions?

Cavalry Crossing A Ford

1. What is cavalry?
2. What are the adjectives the poet uses to paint this word picture? What atmosphere does the poem create? One of hurry, purposefulness, or routine action?

Come Up From The Fields Father

1. Who receives the letter?
2. Why is it such an important occasion?
3. Describe the farm scene.
4. Whitman builds a strong contrast between the peacefulness of the prosperous farm and the peace-breaking news of the letter. What is the effect on the reader?
5. What is the mother's reaction when she is called to the front door?
6. What first alarms her?
7. How does the daughter try to comfort her?
8. Discuss the meaning of the word *better* in lines 21 and 29 as compared to its use in line 32.
9. Do you think the last stanza weakens the total effect of the poem? Give your reasons.

Spirit That Form'd This Scene

1. The poet is viewing a canyon in Colorado. How does he describe it?
2. Why does he think it must have been formed by a "savage spirit"? What kinship does Whitman feel with this spirit?
3. What comparison does the poet draw between the canyon and his work?
4. Who is "they" in the last line?
5. What does this poem tell us about Whitman's view of art?
6. Whitman's poetry was criticized in his day for being rather rough and uncivilized. Do you think this poem is an example that justifies that criticism? Give your reasons.

B. 1. Are there authors or poets in your country who are trying to find new ways of saying things much as Whitman did in his day?
2. It is possible to have a poet who will be a poet both of the common people and of the elite?
3. In the history of your country's literature, what poets have been known for their attacks on social institutions? for their emphasis on brotherly love?

CHAPTER XIII

EMILY DICKINSON

EMILY DICKINSON (1830-1886)

If I read a book and it makes my body so cold no fire can ever warm me, I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry.

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) wrote her whimsical, darting verse with sublime indifference to any notion of being a democratic or popular poet. Her work, far different from that of either Whitman or Longfellow, illustrated the fact that one could take a single household and an inactive life, and make enchanting poetry out of it.

Miss Dickinson was born in Amherst, Massachusetts, where her father was a prominent lawyer and politician and where her grandfather had established an academy and college. Emily's family was very closely knit and she and her sister remained at home and did not marry. Emily seldom left Amherst; she attended college in a nearby town for one year, and later made one trip as far as Washington and two or three trips to Boston. After 1862 she became a total recluse, not leaving her house nor seeing even close friends. Her early letters and descriptions of herself in her youth reveal an attractive girl with a lively wit. Her later retirement from the world, though perhaps affected by an unhappy love affair, seems mainly to have resulted from her own personality, from a desire to separate herself from the world. The range of her poetry suggests not her limited experiences but the power of her creativity and imagination.

When she began writing poetry Emily had relatively little formal education. She did know Shakespeare and classical mythology and was especially interested in women authors such as Elizabeth Browning and the Bronte sisters. She was also acquainted with the works of Emerson, Thoreau and Hawthorne. Though she did not believe in the conventional religion of her family, she had studied the Bible, and

many of her poems resemble hymns in form.

There were several men who, at different times in her life, acted as teacher or master to Emily. The first was Benjamin Newton, a young lawyer in her father's law office who improved her literary and cultural tastes and influenced her ideas on religion. She refers to him as "a friend, who taught me Immortality."

Emily's next teacher was Charles Wadsworth, a married, middle-aged minister who provided her with intellectual challenge and contact with the outside world. It appears that she felt an affection for him that he could not return, and when he moved to San Francisco in 1862, she removed herself from society even more than she had before. Wadsworth may have been the model for the lover in her poems, though it is just as likely that the literary figure is purely imaginary.

Miss Dickinson's greatest outpouring of poems occurred in the early 1860s, and because she was so isolated, the Civil War affected her thinking very little. At this time she sent some of her work to Thomas Higginson, a prominent critic and author. He was impressed by her poetry, but suggested that she use a more conventional grammar. Emily, however, refused to revise her poems to fit the standards of others and took no interest in having them published; in fact she had only seven poems published during her lifetime. In Higginson she did, nevertheless, gain an intelligent and sympathetic critic with whom to discuss her work.

In the last years of her life Emily seldom saw visitors, but kept in touch with her friends through letters, short poems and small gifts. After her death in 1886, her sister found nearly 1,800 poems that she had written. Many of the poems were finally published in the 1890s, and Emily Dickinson, like Melville, was rediscovered by the literary world in the 1920s.

Emily Dickinson's poetry comes out in bursts. The poems are short, many of them being based on a single image or symbol. But within her little lyrics Miss Dickinson writes about some of the most important things in life. She writes about love and a lover, whom she either never really found or else gave up. She writes about nature. She writes about mortality and immortality. She writes about success, which she thought she never achieved, and about failure, which she considered her constant companion. She writes of these things so brilliantly that she is now ranked as one of America's great poets.

Her poetry is read today throughout much of the world and yet its exact wording has not been completely determined, nor has its arrangement and punctuation. Since Emily never prepared her poems for publication, one of the bitterest battles in American literary history has been fought over who should publish and edit what she wrote. However, regardless of details or conflicts, there is no doubt that the solitary Miss Dickinson of Amherst, Massachusetts, is a writer of great power and beauty.

Selection 1

SUCCESS

Success is counted sweetest
By those who ne'er succeed.
To comprehend a nectar
Requires sorest need.

Not one of all the purple host
Who took the flag today
Can tell the definition,
So clear, of victory,

As he, defeated, dying,
On whose forbidden ear
The distant strains of triumph
Break, agonized and clear.

Selection II

I TASTE A LIQUOR NEVER BREWED

I taste a liquor never brewed,
From tankards scooped in pearl;
Not all the vats upon the Rhine[1]
Yield such an alcohol!

Inebriate of air am I,
And debauchee of dew,
Reeling, through endless summer days,
From inns of molten blue.

When landlords turn the drunken bee
Out of the foxglove's door,
When butterflies renounce their drams,
I shall but drink the more!

Till seraphs swing their snowy hats,
And saints to windows run,
To see the little tippler
Leaning against the sun!

1 the Rhine—a river flowing from Switzerland through Germany and the Netherlands into the North Sea.

Selection III

THERE'S A CERTAIN SLANT OF LIGHT

There's a certain slant of light,
On winter afternoons,
That oppresses, like the weight
Of cathedral tunes.

Heavenly hurt it gives us;
We can find no scar,
But internal difference
Where the meanings are.

None may teach it anything
'Tis the seal, despair,—
An imperial affliction
Sent us of the air.

When it comes, the landscape listens,
Shadows hold their breath;
When it goes, 'tis like the distance
On the look of death.

Selection IV

MUCH MADNESS IS DIVINEST SENSE

Much madness is divinest sense
To a discerning eye;
Much sense the starkest madness.
'Tis the majority
In this, as all, prevails.
Assent, and you are sane;
Demur,—you're straightway dangerous,
And handled with a chain.

Selection V

I'M NOBODY! WHO ARE YOU?

I'm nobody! Who are you?
Are you nobody, too?
Then there's a pair of us—don't tell!
They'd banish us, you know.

How dreary to be somebody!
How public, like a frog
To tell your name the livelong day
To an admiring bog!

Selection VI

AGAIN HIS VOICE IS AT THE DOOR

Again his voice is at the door,
I feel the old degree,
I hear him ask the servant
For such an one as me;

I take a flower as I go
My face to justify,
He never saw me in this life,
I might surprise his eye.

I cross the hall with mingled steps,
I silent pass the door,
I look on all this world contains—
Just his face—nothing more!

We talk in venture and in toss,
A kind of plummet strain,
Each sounding shyly just how deep
The other's foot had been.

We walk. I leave my dog behind.
A tender thoughtful moon
Goes with us just a little way
And then we are alone.

Alone—if angels are alone
First time they try the sky!
Alone—if those veiled faces be
We cannot count on high!

I'd give to live that hour again
The purple in my vein;
But he must count the drops himself—
My price for every stain!

Selection VII

TO FIGHT ALOUD IS VERY BRAVE

To fight aloud is very brave,
But gallanter, I know,
Who charge within the bosom,
The cavalry of woe.

Who win, and nations do not see,
Who fall, and none observe,
Whose dying eyes no country
Regards with patriot love.

We trust, in plumed procession,
For such the angels go,
Rank after rank, with even feet
And uniforms of snow.

Selection VIII

THE BUSTLE IN A HOUSE

The bustle in a house
The morning after death
Is solemnest of industries
Enacted upon earth,—

The sweeping up the heart,
And putting love away
We shall not want to use again
Until eternity.

Selection IX

HE ATE AND DRANK THE PRECIOUS WORDS

He ate and drank the precious words,
His spirit grew robust;
He knew no more that he was poor,
Nor that his frame was dust.

93

He danced along the dingy days,
And this bequest of wings
Was but a book. What liberty
A loosened spirit brings!

Selection X

CRUMBLING IS NOT AN INSTANT'S ACT

Crumbling is not an instant's act,
A fundamental pause;
Dilapidation's processes
Are organized decays.

'Tis first a cobweb on the soul,
A cuticle of dust,
A borer in the axis,
An elemental rust.

Ruin is formal, devil's work,
Consecutive and slow—
Fail in an instant no man did,
Slipping is crash's law.

Selection XI

YOU CANNOT MAKE REMEMBRANCE GROW

You cannot make remembrance grow
When it has lost its root,
The tightening the soil around
And setting it upright

Deceives perhaps the universe
But not retrieves the plant;
Real memory, like cedar feet,
Is shod with adamant.

Nor can you cut remembrance down
When it shall once have grown,
Its iron buds will sprout anew
However overthrown.

Selection XII

THIS IS MY LETTER TO THE WORLD

This is my letter to the world,
  That never wrote to me,—
The simple news that Nature told,
  With tender majesty.

Her message is committed
  To hands I cannot see;
For love of her, sweet countrymen,
  Judge tenderly of me!

SELECTIONS I through XII

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Success

A. 1. According to the poem, what best understands success? In your opinion, who wants most to succeed? Does the successful person value success? Does he recognize it for what it is?

2. Explain the meaning of the first stanza in your own words. How does the poet develop this idea further in the other two stanzas?

3. Can you draw analogies from your own experience to illustrate the central idea of the poem?

I Taste A Liquor Never Brewed

1. What is the liquor the poet drinks?
2. Few poets have handled images with more artistry than Emily Dickinson. What image does she use to suggest drunkenness?
3. What are the "inns of molten blue?"
4. Explain the imagery of the last stanza.

There's A Certain Slant Of Light

1. Do you agree with the poet that certain conditions of winter weather influence our mood? Explain.
2. What does the poet mean when she says "None may teach it anything 'Tis the seal, despair,—"?
3. When the winter mood changes, what effect does it leave?
4. What word images does the poet use to help convey the oppressive mood that the weather creates?

Much Madness Is Divinest Sense

1. Does the poet trust the opinion of the majority? Illustrate with lines from the poem. In which lines does she express her own opinion? Do you agree with her? Why or why not?
2. Give your interpretation of the paradox expressed in lines 1 and 3.
3. How does Emily Dickinson's view of conformity compare with that of Emerson and Thoreau?

I'm Nobody! Who Are You?

1. Who are the "they" in line 4? the "admiring bog" in line 8?
2. Do you prefer solitude to public life? Give your reasons.
3. Write a poem similar to "I'm Nobody! Who Are You?" in which you follow the same verse pattern but use different images.

Again His Voice Is At The Door

1. In this love poem, would you say that the love is mutual? Support your answer with examples from the poem.
2. What do the last two lines of verse 2 mean?
3. What lines show that the poet feels that the man is the center of her universe?
4. Explain the meaning of stanza 4 in your own words.
5. In what sense are the lovers not alone on their walk?
6. What price is the poet willing to pay to relive the hour the lovers have spent together? Does she ask anything in return from the man?

To Fight Aloud Is Very Brave

1. Do you agree with the poet that silent courage is the highest kind of bravery? Why or why not? Can you think of examples from your own experience in which people have borne their sufferings in uncomplaining silence?
2. What is the meaning of the last stanza?

The Bustle In A House

1. What is the saddest and most solemn activity "enacted upon earth"?
2. What hope does the poet offer in the last stanza?

He Ate And Drank The Precious Words

1. Has the reading of a book ever affected you in the way the poet describes it in the poem? If so, what books would you name as having had such an effect?
2. In your opinion, what kind of liberty does a "loosened spirit" bring?
3. How does the following Dickinson poem compare in thought with "He Ate And Drank The Precious Words"?

> There is no frigate like a book
> To take us lands away,
> Nor any coursers like a page
> Of prancing poetry.
> This traverse may the poorest take
> Without oppress of toll;
> How frugal is the chariot
> That bears a human soul!

Crumbling Is Not An Instant's Act

1. In this poem Miss Dickinson reflects that ruin or failure in the life of a person is a long slow process of decay. Give examples from your own experience or from your reading.
2. Cobwebs, dust, and rust are rather insignificant in their beginnings, yet eventually they can take over or destroy things such as houses or machines. Can you draw an analogy between these destroyers and our words or our small actions and apply them, say, to marriage or friendships?
3. What does the poet mean by saying that "Ruin is formal, devil's work"? Do you agree? Why or why not?

You Cannot Make Remembrance Grow

1. Explain the meaning of this poem in your own words. Can you illustrate this meaning from some experience in your own life?

This Is My Letter To The World

1. What is the poet's letter to the world? What news does it contain? To whom is it delivered? Why does she implore her countrymen to judge her tenderly?
2. One could say that Emily Dickinson is expressing her vision of the poet's task and function in this poem. What is the role of the poet according to her? What is the poet's relationship to the world? How would you define the role of the poet?
3. If you have access to Edwin Arlington Robinson's poem "Oh for a Poet," compare his vision of the role of the poet with that of Emily Dickinson.

B. 1. What picture of Emily Dickinson do you get from her poems? Do you think you would have liked her as a person? Why or why not?
2. What does Emily Dickinson gain in her poetry by being so compact in style and by presenting only the kernel of a thought? Does she lose anything by avoiding conventional poetic language and imagery? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Select your favorite poem from among those given here and write a short paragraph explaining the reason for your choice.
4. What poet from your national literature compares in style and language with Emily Dickinson? Did he or she also live as a recluse?
5. Do you think a life of solitude is more conducive to producing a superior poet than a life of much social activity? Explain.

CHAPTER XIV

MARK TWAIN

MARK TWAIN (Samuel L. Clemens)
(1835-1910)

When I was a boy, there was but one permanent ambition among my comrades in my village on the west bank of the Mississippi River. That was, to be a steamboatman. We had transient ambitions of other sorts, but they were only transient. When a circus came and went, it left us all burning to become clowns; the first Negro minstrel show that came to our section left us all suffering to try that kind of life, now and then we had a hope that if we lived and were good, God would permit us to be pirates. These ambitions faded out, each in its turn; but the ambition to be a steamboatman always remained.

—from Life on the Mississippi

Mark Twain (1835-1910) is the pen name of Samuel L. Clemens, the writer H. L. Mencken called "the true father of our national literature." This title may be justified, for Twain made a more extensive combination of American folk humor and serious literature than previous writers had done.

Clemens was born in the backwoods of Missouri, but while he was yet a small boy the family moved to Hannibal on the Mississippi River. There Sam developed a passion for the river and a desire to become the pilot on a riverboat. This was the dream of all the boys along the river, and Twain was very proud of himself when, later on, he actually became a pilot.

Clemens' father had wanted to be a lawyer, and did actually serve as a justice of the peace and judge, but had to make his living as a farmer and storekeeper. He was a popular man in Hannibal, but remained poor, and when he died Sam was apprenticed to a printer. Thus at age 11 Sam's formal schooling ended, though he continued to read extensively. As was the case with many 19th-century writers, the printshop and journalism served as preparation for his literary career.

After working on his brother's newspaper for awhile, in 1854 Sam set out on his own, working as a printer in various Eastern and midwestern towns. In 1856 he fulfilled his boyhood dream by becoming a riverboat pilot. When the boats stopped operating during the Civil War, Clemens served for a time as a volunteer soldier and then, in 1862, he went West.

Clemens first wrote for a newspaper in Nevada and then moved to San Francisco. During this period he wrote mainly humorous sketches, the most famous

being "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County." Between 1865 and 1870, Clemens went on tours of Hawaii, Europe, and the Middle East as a correspondent; later his adventures served as the subject of several books. His newspaper accounts of his travels spread his popularity, so that on his return he also became a successful humorous lecturer.

In 1870, Clemens married a wealthy and rather aristocratic girl and settled in the East, first in Buffalo and then permanently in Hartford, Connecticut. When he moved to Hartford, Clemens gave up journalism to make fiction writing his career. His writing was popular and sold well, although he sometimes found lecture tours necessary to supplement his income.

In Hartford, Clemens was surrounded by a wealthy, genteel society including several other popular authors of the time, and it has been assumed that this influence modified the boisterous writer of newspaper days, curbing his wit and social criticism. This assumption is not entirely true, for the "Mark Twain" who appeared autobiographically in the stories of the West, and the Samuel Clemens of Hartford society were both, to some degree, social poses. Clemens' work does not suffer from being overly genteel, and his satirical writing is a sharp attack on society. In his last years, Clemens became increasingly bitter; some of his writing of this period is so pessimistic that he withheld it from publication.

The typical motif in Clemens' writing was the narration of a story by a young or naive person or a story in which the main character was an Easterner unaccustomed to frontier life. In Clemens' stories the over-refined Easterner was usually outwitted by Westerners. When he wrote from a youth's perspective, the youth was usually wise beyond his years but retained an idealism which Clemens contrasted with the hypocrisy and cruelty of the adult world.

SELECTION

Samuel Clemens viewed people with great pessimism, but his bitterness diminished when he wrote about his early days and the Mississippi River. In the excerpt from *Life on the Mississippi* we see how he achieved his boyhood ambition to be a riverboat pilot. He tells us how he was apprenticed to a peppery expert named Bixby. In the early part of the book the narrator, Mark Twain, explains the problems of learning to pilot a steamboat on the Mississippi. The river was always changing; its channels always shifting. And yet the pilot had to know the river like the back of his hand. He had to keep his steamboat safe from rocks and snags, from shallow water and a hundred other perils. And he had to do all this not only in the light of day but in the black of night.

Just before this excerpt opens, Mr. Bixby is exasperated by his pupil's slowness in learning but announces with comic fierceness that whenever he agrees to teach someone to be a pilot, "I'll learn him or kill him." Bit by bit he "learns" him and the time comes when he lets Mark Twain pilot the steamboat himself. Twain panics but Mr. Bixby comes to his rescue. Gradually Twain gets to know the river. His knowledge becomes so ingrained that it is almost instinctive. He is now a very learned man in his specialty. Finally, at the end of the excerpt Mark Twain talks to us, both seriously and a bit sentimentally, about the loss of innocence. He can now read the river like a book—he knows what everything about it signifies—but his simple joy in its beauty is gone. He will never again relish the poetry of the river. Like Adam, he has eaten the fruit that has brought him knowledge and he has had to pay for it.

From Life on the Mississippi

Chapter 9

There was no use in arguing with a person like this. I promptly put such a strain on my memory that by and by even the

shoal water and the countless crossing-marks began to stay with me. But the result was just the same. I never could more than get one knotty thing learned before another presented itself. Now I had often seen pilots gazing at the water and pretending to read it as if it were a book; but it was a book that told me nothing. A time came at last, however, when Mr. Bixby seemed to think me far enough advanced to bear a lesson on water-reading. So he began:

"Do you see that long, slanting line on the face of the water? Now, that's a reef. Moreover, it's a bluff reef. There is a solid sand-bar under it that is nearly as straight up and down as the side of a house. There is plenty of water close up to it, but mighty little on top of it. If you were to hit it you would knock the boat's brains out. Do you see where the line fringes out at the upper end and begins to fade away?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, that is a low place; that is the head of the reef. You can climb over there, and not hurt anything. Cross over, now, and follow along close under the reef—easy water there—not much current."

I followed the reef along till I approached the fringed end. Then Mr. Bixby said:

"Now get ready. Wait till I give the word. She won't want to mount the reef; a boat hates shoal water. Stand by—wait—*wait*—keep her well in hand. *Now* cramp her down! Snatch her! Snatch her!"

He seized the other side of the wheel and helped to spin it around until it was hard down, and then we held it so. The boat resisted, and refused to answer for a while, and next she came surging to starboard, mounted the reef, and sent a long, angry ridge of water foaming away from her bows.

"Now watch her; watch her like a cat, or she'll get away from you. When she fights strong and the tiller slips a little, in a jerky, greasy sort of way, let up on her a trifle; it is the way she tells you at night that the water is too shoal; but keep edging her up, little by little, toward the point. You are well up on the bar now; there is a bar under every point, because the water that comes down around it forms an eddy and allows the sediment to sink. Do you see those fine lines on the face of the water that branch out like the ribs of a fan? Well, those are little reefs; you want to just miss the ends of them, but run them pretty close. Now look out—look out! Don't you crowd that slick, greasy-looking place; there ain't nine feet there; she won't stand it. She begins to smell it; look sharp, I tell you! Oh, blazes, there you go! Stop the starboard wheel! Quick! Ship up to back! Set her back!"

The engine bells jingled and the engines answered promptly, shooting white columns of steam far aloft out of the 'scape-pipes, but it was too late. The boat had "smelt" the bar in good earnest; the foamy ridges that radiated from her bows suddenly disappeared, a great dead swell came rolling forward, and swept ahead of her, she careened far over to larboard, and went tearing away toward the shore as if she were about scared to death. We were a good mile from where we ought to have been when we finally got the upper hand of her again.

During the afternoon watch the next day, Mr. Bixby asked me if I knew how to run the next few miles. I said:

"Go inside the first snag above the point, outside the next one, star out from the lower end of Higgins's woodyard, make a square crossing, and—"

"That's all right. I'll be back before you close up on the next point."

101

But he wasn't. He was still below when I rounded it and entered upon a piece of the river which I had some misgivings about. I did not know that he was hiding behind a chimney to see how I would perform. I went gaily along, getting prouder and prouder, for he had never left the boat in my sole charge such a length of time before. I even got to "setting" her and letting the wheel go entirely, while I vainglori-ously turned my back and inspected the stern marks and hummed a tune, a sort of easy indifference which I had prodigiously admired in Bixby and other great pilots. Once I inspected rather long, and when I faced to the front again my heart flew into my mouth so suddenly that if I hadn't clapped my teeth together I should have lost it. One of those frightful bluff reefs was stretching its deadly length right across our bows! My head was gone in a moment; I did not know which end I stood on; I gasped and could not get my breath; I spun the wheel down with such rapidity that it wove itself together like a spider's web; the boat answered and turned square away from the reef, but the reef followed her! I fled, but still it followed, still it kept—right across my bows! I never looked to see where I was going, I only fled. The awful crash was imminent. Why didn't that villain come? If I committed the crime of ringing a bell I might get thrown overboard. But better that than kill the boat. So in blind desperation, I started such a rattling "shivaree" down below as never had astounded an engineer in this world before, I fancy. Amidst the frenzy of the bells the engines began to back and fill in a curious way, and my reason forsook its throne—we were about to crash into the woods on the other side of the river. Just then Mr. Bixby stepped calmly into view on the hurricane-deck. My soul went out to him in gratitude. My distress vanished; I would have felt safe on the brink of Niagara[1] with Mr. Bixby on the hurri-cane-deck. He blandly and sweetly took his toothpick out of his mouth between his fingers, as if it were a cigar—we were just in the act of climbing an overhang-ing big tree, and the passengers were scud-ding astern like rats—and lifted up these commands to me ever so gently:

"Stop the starboard! Stop the larboard! Set her back on both!"

The boat hesitated, halted, pressed her nose among the boughs a critical instant, then reluctantly began to back away.

"Stop the larboard! Come ahead on it! Stop the starboard! Come ahead on it! Point her for the bar!"

I sailed away as serenely as a summer's morning. Mr. Bixby came in and said, with mock simplicity:

"When you have a hail,[2] my boy, you ought to tap the big bell three times before you land, so that the engineers can get ready."

I blushed under the sarcasm, and said I hadn't had any hail.

"Ah! Then it was for wood, I suppose. The officer of the watch will tell you when he wants to wood up."

I went on consuming, and said I wasn't after wood.

"Indeed! Why, what could you want over here in the bend, then? Did you ever know of a boat following a bend upstream at this stage of the river?"

"No, sir—and *I* wasn't trying to follow it. I was getting away from a bluff reef."

"No, it wasn't a bluff reef; there isn't one within three miles of where you were."

"But I saw it. It was as bluff as that one yonder."

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1. Niagara—Niagara Falls, a waterfall on the Niagara River between New York state and Canada.
2. "When you have a hail"—when you are called by someone on the river bank to stop for them.

"Just about. Run over it!"

"Do you give it as an order?"

"Yes. Run over it!"

"If I don't, I wish I may die."

"All right; I am taking the responsibility."

I was just as anxious to kill the boat, now, as I had been to save it before. I impressed my orders upon my memory, to be used at the inquest, and made a straight break for the reef. As it disappeared under our bows I held my breath; but we slid over it like oil.

"Now, don't you see the difference? It wasn't anything but a *wind* reef. The wind does that."

"So I see. But it is exactly like a bluff reef. How am I ever going to tell them apart?"

It turned out to be true. The face of the water, in time, became a wonderful book —a book that was a dead language to the uneducated passenger, but which told its mind to me without reserve, delivering its most cherished secrets as clearly as if it uttered them with a voice. And it was not a book to be read once and thrown aside, for it had a new story to tell every day. Throughout the long twelve hundred miles there was never a page that was void of interest, never one that you could leave unread without loss, never one that you would want to skip, thinking you could find higher enjoyment in some other thing. There never was so wonderful a book written by man; never one whose interest was so absorbing, so unflagging, so sparklingly renewed with every reperusal. The passenger who could not read it was charmed with a peculiar sort of faint dimple on its surface (on the rare occasions when he did not overlook it altogether); but to the pilot that was an *italicized* passage; indeed, it was more than that, it was a legend of the largest capitals, with a string of shouting exclamation-points at the end of it, for it meant that a wreck or a rock was buried there that could tear the life out of the strongest vessels that ever floated. It is the faintest and simplest expression the water ever makes, and the most hideous to a pilot's eye. In truth, the passenger who could not read this book saw nothing but all manner of pretty pictures in it, painted by the sun and shaded by the clouds, whereas to the trained eye these were not pictures at all, but the grimmest and most dead-earnest of reading matter.

Now when I had mastered the language of this water, and had come to know every trifling feature that bordered the great river as familiarly as I knew the letters of the alphabet, I had made a valuable acquisition. But I had lost something, too. I had lost something which could never be restored to me while I lived. All the grace, the beauty, the poetry, had gone out of the majestic river! I still kept in mind a certain wonderful sunset which I witnessed when steamboating was new to me. A broad expanse of the river was turned to blood; in the middle distance the red hue brightened into gold, through which a solitary log came floating, black and conspicuous; in one place a long, slanting mark lay sparkling upon the water; in another the surface was broken by boiling, tumbling rings, that were as many-tinted as an opal; where the ruddy flush was faintest, was a smooth spot that was covered with graceful circles and radiating lines, ever so delicately traced; the shore on our left was densely wooded, and the somber shadow that fell from this forest was broken in one place by a long, ruffled trail that shone like silver; and high above the forest wall a clean-stemmed dead tree waved a single leafy bough that glowed like a flame in the

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unobstructed splendor that was flowing from the sun. There were graceful curves, reflected images, woody heights, soft distances; and over the whole scene, far and near, the dissolving lights drifted steadily, enriching it every passing moment with new marvels of coloring.

I stood like one bewitched. I drank it in, in a speechless rapture. The world was new to me, and I had never seen anything like this at home. But as I have said, a day came when I began to cease from noting the glories and the charms which the moon and the sun and the twilight wrought upon the river's face; another day came when I ceased altogether to note them. Then, if that sunset scene had been repeated, I should have looked upon it without rapture, and should have commented upon it inwardly after this fashion: "This sun means that we are going to have wind tomorrow; that floating log means that the river is rising, small thanks to it; that slanting mark on the water refers to a bluff reef which is going to kill somebody's steamboat one of these nights, if it keeps on stretching out like that; those tumbling 'boils' show a dissolving bar and a changing channel there; the lines and circles in the slick water over yonder are a warning that that troublesome place is shoaling up dangerously; that silver streak in the shadow of the forest is the 'break' from a new snag, and he has located himself in the very best place he could have found to fish for steamboats; that tall dead tree, with a single living branch, is not going to last long, and then how is a body ever going to get through this blind place at night without the friendly old landmark?"

No, the romance and beauty were all gone from the river. All the value any feature of it had for me now was the amount of usefulness it could furnish toward compassing the safe piloting of a steamboat. Since those days, I have pitied doctors from my heart. What does the lovely flush in a beauty's cheek mean to a doctor but a "break" that ripples above some deadly disease? Are not all her visible charms sown thick with what are to him the signs and symbols of hidden decay? Does he ever see her beauty at all, or doesn't he simply view her professionally, and comment upon her unwholesome condition all to himself? And doesn't he sometimes wonder whether he has gained most or lost most by learning his trade?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you gather was needed to make a good river pilot? What other jobs require similar qualities, in your opinion?

2. Do you think Mr. Bixby was a good teacher? Why or why not?

3. After Twain's mistake with the wind reef, Mr. Bixby asked him some questions which give us insights into the routine of steamboat piloting.

(a) How did people on shore signal to the steamboat that they wanted to come aboard?

(b) How did the pilot let the engineer know he was planning to pick up passengers?

(c) How did the boat get fuel for its boiler furnaces?

4. What did Twain lose when he got to know the river as an experienced pilot should?

5. After he learned to be a pilot, Twain recounts how former "scenes of beauty" communicated in a new way to him. How were each of the following items "read" by the veteran river pilot?

(a) the sun at sunset

(b) a floating log
(c) the sparkling, slanting line
(d) boily, tumbling rings in the water
(e) a smooth spot with circles and radiating lines
(f) a somber shadow broken by a long silver trail
(g) a clean-stemmed dead tree rising above the forest

6. Write a short composition in which you express your own ideas concerning Twain's theory that a man loses as well as gains by learning a trade.

CHAPTER XV

STEPHEN CRANE

STEPHEN CRANE (1871-1900)

Once there came a man
Who said,
"Range me all me of the world in rows."
And instantly
There was terrific clamor among the people
Against being ranged in rows.
There was a loud quarrel, world-wide
It endured for ages.
And blood was shed
By those who would not stand in rows,
And by those who pined to stand in rows.
Eventually, the man went to death, weeping.
And those who stayed in bloody scuffle
Knew not the great simplicity.

(1895)

Crane (1871-1900) saw life as hard, perhaps ruthless. Most of the writing he published during his short life was bleakly realistic, dealing with the poor and degraded. His style has been called realistic, naturalistic, and impressionistic. Like the impressionist painters, he tried to give an accurate rendering of the scene as a whole rather than concentrating on detail. His style is also marked by the use of vivid color and imagery.

In many ways Crane's life resembles his adventures stories, though his childhood was quite conventional. He was born in New Jersey in 1871; when he was small his ill health was partly responsible for his family's move to upstate New York. His father was a Methodist minister, and the family was a large, happy one. When Rev. Crane died, Stephen's mother earned money by writing articles for religious papers.

As he grew up, however, Stephen found his parent's religion irrelevant to the hard life he saw, and he indulged in many of the things they had forbidden. One of the forbidden pleasures was baseball, a sport at which Crane excelled. He might have become a professional player, but an older brother urged him to go to college instead. He spent a year at Lafayette College and a year at Syracuse University, where he spent more time on baseball and social activities than he spent on his studies.

Crane left school in 1891, preferring to study humanity, he said, and became a reporter on the newspaper for which his brother worked. However, when he wrote too sympathetically about a workers' strike, both he and his brother lost their jobs.

The next year Crane moved to the Bowery in New York, where he lived amidst

the poverty he liked to write about. During this period he met Hamlin Garland and William Dean Howells, two other realist writers who helped him in his work. At this time he also met the painters whose impressionism influenced his work, and wrote a novel, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. No one would publish the grimly realistic book, and when Crane printed it at his own expense, booksellers would not handle it and no one bought it.

Soon after, in 1895, Crane published *The Red Badge of Courage;* it was serialized in newspapers and was an immediate success. Then the demand for *Maggie* and for Crane's newspaper stories began to increase. Now a celebrity, Crane was sent by newspapers to the West and to Mexico to gather ideas for stories. He also published a book of poems, *The Black Riders*.

The next year, accompanying a group of filibusterers—men going to aid Cuban revolutionaries—Crane was shipwrecked and spent 27 hours at sea in a small boat with three other men. His newspaper report, and later his short story "The Open Boat" were dramatic accounts of the fear, courage, and endurance of the men.

Crane next reported on the Greco-Turkish war in 1897; this was the first experience in war for the man who had written *The Red Badge of Courage* two years earlier. For that book, Crane had imagined his feelings in combat, drawing on the emotions he observed while playing football. After experiencing war in Greece, he felt more certain that his book had been accurate and wrote: *The Red Badge* is all right." Despite this, he referred to the book and its success as "a mere incident"; he preferred poetry, which he felt gave a fuller picture of his philosophy.

After the war, Crane settled in England, where he became friends with such authors as Joseph Conrad and Henry James. At the beginning of the Spanish-American War in 1898, Crane tried to enlist in the American navy, but was rejected because he had tuberculosis. Despite this, he went to Cuba as a war correspondent.

Crane's exertions in Cuba did further damage to his health. He returned to England and then went to Germany in the hope of improving his health. He died soon after reaching Germany in June, 1900.

SELECTION 1

The Red Badge of Courage, Crane's most famous novel, describes the thoughts and deeds of a young soldier under fire. With astonishing insight, considering that Crane had never known war, it reveals the effect of battle on a raw recruit. Henry Fleming, a private in the Civil War, is serving in a Union regiment fighting the Confederates. Before the excerpt printed here begins, he has had his first experience in battle, has fled in panic, and then has managed to rejoin his regiment. He has been hit on the head by another Union soldier but he lets his comrades think he has been wounded by the enemy and that that is how he got his "red badge of courage." When he goes into his second battle he finds that he is ashamed enough to fight, not nobly, but like a threatened animal. He fights so hard that he wins the respect of both his comrades and officers. He continues to fight and to learn about himself till the end of the book. The selection that follows is the conclusion of the book, a kind of catharsis.

From The Red Badge of Courage

Chapter 17

This advance of the enemy had seemed to the youth like a ruthless hunting. He began to fume with rage and exasperation. He beat his foot upon the ground, and scowled with hate at the swirling smoke that was approaching like a phantom

flood. There was a maddening quality in this seeming resolution of the foe to give him no rest, to give him no time to sit down and think. Yesterday he had fought and had fled rapidly. There had been many adventures. For today he felt that he had earned opportunities for contemplative repose. He could have enjoyed portraying to uninitiated listeners various scenes at which he had been a witness or ably discussing the processes of war with other proved men. Too it was important that he should have time for physical recuperation. He was sore and stiff from his experiences. He had received his fill of all exertions, and he wished to rest.

But those other men seemed never to grow weary; they were fighting with their old speed. He had a wild hate for the relentless foe. Yesterday, when he had imagined the universe to be against him, he had hated it, little gods and big gods; today he hated the army of the foe with the same great hatred. He was not going to be badgered of his life, like a kitten chased by boys, he said. It was not well to drive men into final corners; at those moments they could all develop teeth and claws.

He leaned and spoke into his friend's ear. He menaced the woods with a gesture. "If they keep on chasing us, by Gawd, they'd better watch out. Can't stand *too* much."

The friend twisted his head and made a calm reply. "If they keep on a-chasin' us they'll drive us all inteh th' river."

The youth cried out savagely at this statement. He crouched behind a little tree, with his eyes burning hatefully and his teeth set in a curlike snarl. The awkward bandage was still about his head, and upon it, over his wound, there was a spot of dry blood. His hair was wondrously tousled, and some straggling, moving locks hung over the cloth of the bandage down toward his forehead. His jacket and shirt were open at the throat, and exposed his young bronzed neck. There could be seen spasmodic gulpings at his throat.

His fingers twined nervously about his rifle. He wished that it was an engine of annihilating power. He felt that he and his companions were being taunted and derided from sincere convictions that they were poor and puny. His knowledge of his inability to take vengeance for it made his rage into a dark and stormy specter, that possessed him and made him dream of abominable cruelties. The tormentors were flies sucking insolently at his blood, and he thought that he would have given his life for a revenge of seeing their faces in pitiful plights.

The wind of battle had swept all about the regiment, until the one rifle, instantly followed by others, flashed in its front. A moment later the regiment roared forth its sudden and valiant retort. A dense wall of smoke settled slowly down. It was furiously slit and slashed by the knifelike fire from the rifles.

To the youth the fighters resembled animals tossed for a death struggle into a dark pit. There was a sensation that he and his fellows, at bay, were pushing back, always pushing fierce onslaughts of creatures who were slippery. Their beams of crimson seemed to get no purchase upon the bodies of their foes; the latter seemed to evade them with ease, and come through, between, around, and about with unopposed skill.

When, in a dream, it occurred to the youth that his rifle was an impotent stick, he lost sense of everything but his hate, his desire to smash into pulp the glittering smile of victory which he could feel upon the faces of his enemies.

The blue smoke-swallowed line curled and writhed like a snake stepped upon. It

swung its ends to and fro in an agony of fear and rage.

The youth was not conscious that he was erect upon his feet. He did not know the direction of the ground. Indeed, once he even lost the habit of balance and fell heavily. He was up again immediately. One thought went through the chaos of his brain at the time. He wondered if he had fallen because he had been shot. But the suspicion flew away at once. He did not think more of it.

He had taken up a first position behind the little tree, with a direct determination to hold it against the world. He had not deemed it possible that his army could that day succeed, and from this he felt the ability to fight harder. But the throng had surged in all ways, until he lost directions and locations, save that he knew where lay the enemy.

The flames bit him, and the hot smoke broiled his skin. His rifle barrel grew so hot that ordinarily he could not have borne it upon his palms; but he kept on stuffing cartridges into it, and pounding them with his clanking, bending ramrod. If he aimed at some changing form through the smoke, he pulled his trigger with a fierce grunt, as if he were dealing a blow of the fist with all his strength.

When the enemy seemed falling back before him and his fellows, he went instantly forward, like a dog who, seeing his foes lagging, turns and insists upon being pursued. And when he was compelled to retire again, he did it slowly, sullenly, taking steps of wrathful despair.

Once he, in his intent hate, was almost alone, and was firing, when all those near him had ceased. He was so engrossed in his occupation that he was not aware of a lull.

He was recalled by a hoarse laugh and a sentence that came to his ears in a voice of contempt and amazement. "Yeh infernal fool, don't yeh know enough t' quit when there ain't anything t' shoot at? Good Gawd!"

He turned then and, pausing with his rifle thrown half into position, looked at the blue line of his comrades. During this moment of leisure they seemed all to be engaged in staring with astonishment at him. They had become spectators. Turning to the front again he saw, under the lifted smoke, a deserted ground.

He looked bewildered for a moment. Then there appeared upon the glazed vacancy of his eyes a diamond point of intelligence. "Oh," he said, comprehending.

He returned to his comrades and threw himself upon the ground. He sprawled like a man who had been thrashed. His flesh seemed strangely on fire, and the sounds of the battle continued in his ears. He groped blindly for his canteen.

The lieutenant was crowing. He seemed drunk with fighting. He called out to the youth: "By heavens, if I had ten thousand wild cats like you I could tear th' stomach outa this war in less'n a week!" He puffed out his chest with large dignity as he said it.

Some of the men muttered and looked at the youth in awe-struck ways. It was plain that as he had gone on loading and firing and cursing without the proper intermission, they had found time to regard him. And they now looked upon him as a war devil.

The friend came staggering to him. There was some fright and dismay in his voice. "Are yeh all right, Fleming? Do yeh feel all right? There ain't nothin' th' matter with yeh, Henry, is there?"

"No," said the youth with difficulty. His throat seemed full of knobs and burrs.

These incidents made the youth ponder. It was revealed to him that he had been a barbarian, a beast. He had fought like a pagan who defends his religion. Regard-

ing it, he saw that it was fine, wild, and, in some ways, easy. He had been a tremendous figure, no doubt. By this struggle he had overcome obstacles which he had admitted to be mountains. They had fallen like paper peaks, and he was now what he called a hero. And he had not been aware of the process. He had slept and, awaking, found himself a knight.

He lay and basked in the occasional states of his comrades. Their faces were varied in degrees of blackness from the burned powder. Some were utterly smudged. They were reeking with perspiration, and their breaths came hard and wheezing. And from these soiled expanses they peered at him.

"Hot work! Hot work!" cried the lieutenant deliriously. He walked up and down, restless and eager. Sometimes his voice could be heard in a wild, incomprehensible laugh.

When he had a particularly profound thought upon the science of war he always unconsciously addressed himself to the youth.

There was some grim rejoicing by the men. "By thunder, I bet this army'll never see another new reg'ment like us!"

"You bet!

"A dog, a woman, an' a walnut tree,
Th' more yeh beat 'em, th' better they be!

That's like us."

"Lost a piler men, they did. If an ol' woman swep' up th' woods she'd git a dustpanful."

"Yes, an' if she'll come around ag'in in 'bout an hour she'll git a pile more."

The forest still bore its burden of clamor. From off under the trees came the rolling clatter of the musketry. Each distant thicket seemed a strange porcupine with quills of flame. A cloud of dark smoke, as from smoldering ruins, went up toward the sun now bright and gay in the blue-enameled sky. . .

Chapter 24

The roarings that had stretched in a long line of sound across the face of the forest began to grow intermittent and weaker. The stentorian speeches of the artillery continued in some distant encounter, but the crashes of the musketry had almost ceased. The youth and his friend of a sudden looked up; feeling a deadened form of distress at the waning of these noises, which had become a part of life. They could see changes going on among the troops. There were marchings this way and that way. A battery wheeled leisurely. On the crest of a small hill was the thick gleam of many departing muskets.

The youth arose. "Well, what now, I wonder?" he said. By his tone he seemed to be preparing to resent some new monstrosity in the way of dins and smashes. He shaded his eyes with his grimy hand and gazed over the field.

His friend also arose and stared. "I bet we're goin' t' git along out of this an' back over th' river," said he.

"Well, I swan!" said the youth.

They waited, watching. Within a little while the regiment received orders to retrace its way. The men got up grunting from the grass, regretting the soft repose. They jerked their stiffened legs, and stretched their arms over their heads. One man swore as he rubbed his eyes. They all groaned "O Lord!" They had as many objections to this change as they would have had to a proposal for a new battle.

They trampled slowly back over the field across which they had run in a mad scamper.

The regiment marched until it had joined its fellows. The reformed brigade, in column, aimed through a wood at the road. Directly they were in a mass of dust-covered troops, and were trudging along in a way parallel to the enemy's lines as these had been defined by the previous turmoil.

They passed within view of a solid white house, and saw in front of it groups of their comrades lying in wait behind a neat breastwork. A row of guns were booming at a distant enemy. Shells thrown in reply were raising clouds of dust and splinters. Horsemen dashed along the line of intrenchments.

At this point of its march the division curved away from the field and went winding off in the direction of the river. When the significance of this movement had impressed itself upon the youth he turned his head and looked over his shoulder toward the trampled and *debris*-strewed ground. He breathed a breath of new satisfaction. He finally nudged his friend. "Well, it's all over," he said to him.

His friend gazed backward. "B'Gawd, it is," he assented. They mused.

For a time the youth was obliged to reflect in a puzzled and uncertain way. His mind was undergoing a subtle change. It took moments for it to cast off its battleful ways and resume its accustomed course of thought. Gradually his brain emerged from the clogged clouds, and at last he was enabled to more closely comprehend himself and circumstance.

He understood then that the existence of shot and counter-shot was in the past. He had dwelt in a land of strange, squalling upheavals and had come forth. He had been where there was red of blood and black of passion, and he was escaped. His first thoughts were given to rejoicings at this fact.

Later he began to study his deeds, his failures, and his achievements. Thus, fresh from scenes where many of his usual machines of reflection had been idle, from where he had proceeded sheeplike, he struggled to marshal all his acts.

At last they marched before him clearly. From this present viewpoint he was enabled to look upon them in spectator fashion and to criticize them with some correctness, for his new condition had already defeated certain sympathies.

Regarding his procession of memory he felt gleeful and unregretting, for in it his public deeds were paraded in great and shining prominence. Those performances which had been witnessed by his fellows marched now in wide purple and gold, having various deflections. They went gayly with music. It was pleasure to watch these things. He spent delightful minutes viewing the gilded images of memory.

He saw that he was good. He recalled with a thrill of joy the respectful comments of his fellows upon his conduct.

Nevertheless, the ghost of his flight from the first engagement appeared to him and danced. There were small shoutings in his brain about these matters. For a moment he blushed, and the light of his soul flickered with shame.

A specter of reproach came to him. There loomed the dogging memory of the tattered soldier—he who, gored by bullets and faint for blood, had fretted concerning an imagined wound in another; he who had loaned his last of strength and intellect for the tall soldier; he who, blind with weariness and pain, had been deserted in the field.

For an instant a wretched chill of sweat was upon him at the thought that he might be detected in the thing. As he stood persistently before his vision, he gave vent to a cry of sharp irritation and agony.

His friend turned. "What's the matter, Henry?" he demanded. The youth's reply was an outburst of crimson oaths.

As he marched along the little branch-hung roadway among his prattling companions this vision of cruelty brooded over him. It clung near him always and darkened his view of these deeds in purple and gold. Whichever way his thoughts turned they were followed by the somber phantom of the desertion in the fields. He looked stealthily at his companions, feeling sure that they must discern in his face evidences of this pursuit. But they were plodding in ragged array, discussing with quick tongues the accomplishments of the late battle.

"Oh, if a man should come up an' ask me, I'd say we got a dum good lickin'."

"Lickin'—in yer eye! We ain't licked, sonny. We're going down here aways, swing around', an' come in behint 'em."

"Oh, hush, with your comin' in behint 'em. I've seen all 'a that I wanta. Don't tell me about comin' in behint—"

"Bill Smithers, he ses he'd rather been in ten hundred battles than been in that heluva hospital. He ses they got shootin' in th' nighttime, an' shells dropped plum among 'em in th' hospital. He ses sech hollerin' he never see."

"Hasbrouck? He's th' best off'cer in this here reg'ment. He's a whale."

"Didn't I tell yeh we'd come aroun' in behint 'em? Didn't I tell yeh so? We—"

"Oh, shet yer mouth!"

For a time this pursuing recollection of the tattered man took all elation from the youth's veins. He saw his vivid error, and he was afraid that it would stand before him all his life. He took no share in the chatter of his comrades, nor did he look at them or know them, save when he felt sudden suspicion that they were seeing his thoughts and scrutinizing each detail of the scene with the tattered soldier.

Yet gradually he mustered force to put the sin at a distance. And at last his eyes seemed to open to some new ways. He found that he could look back upon the brass and bombast of his earlier gospels and see them truly. He was gleeful when he discovered that he now despised them.

With the conviction came a store of assurance. He felt a quiet manhood, nonassertive but of sturdy and strong blood. He knew that he would no more quail before his guides wherever they should point. He had been to touch the great death, and found that, after all, it was but the great death. He was a man.

So it came to pass that as he trudged from the place of blood and wrath his soul changed. He came from hot plowshares to prospects of clover tranquilly, and it was as if hot plowshares were not. Scars faded as flowers.

It rained. The procession of weary soldiers became a bedraggled train, despondent and muttering, marching with churning effort in a trough of liquid brown mud under a low, wretched sky. Yet the youth smiled, for he saw that the world was a world for him, though many discovered it to be made of oaths and walking sticks. He had rid himself of the red sickness of battle. The sultry nightmare was in the past. He had been an animal blistered and sweating in the heat and pain of war. He turned now with a lover's thirst to images of tranquil skies, fresh meadows, cool brooks—an existence of soft and eternal peace.

Over the river a golden ray of sun came through the hosts of leaden rain clouds.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What makes *The Red Badge of Courage* a psychological novel?

2. How does the author succeed in giving the reader the feeling of war?

3. In what ways does this excerpt illustrate the feeling of aloneness men often experience in time of stress?

4. From what we see in this excerpt, how can we account for the heroic actions which take place in battle?

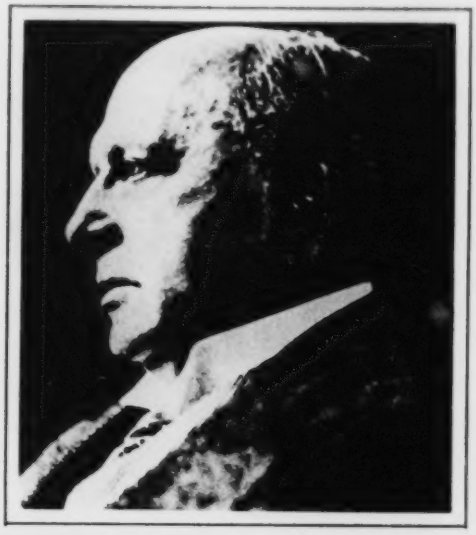
5. What has Fleming learned about himself in the course of the fighting? In your opinion, are the experience and self-knowledge acquired in war applicable to the overcoming of obstacles one encounters in everyday living? Explain your answer.

6. How did the regiment react to orders to fall back? Why did they react as they did?

7. Is there any moral to what you have read in these pages?

CHAPTER XVI

HENRY JAMES



HENRY JAMES (1843-1916)

The only obligation to which in advance we may hold a novel, without incurring the accusation of being arbitrary, is that it be interesting. That general responsibility rests upon it, but it is the only one I can think of. The ways in which it is at liberty to accomplish this result (of interesting us) strike me as innumerable, and such as can only suffer from being marked out or fenced in by prescription. They are as various as the temperament of man, and they are successful in proportion as they reveal a particular mind, different from others. A novel is in its broadest definition a personal, a direct impression of life: that, to begin with, constitutes its value, which is greater or less according to the intensity of the impression. But there will be no intensity at all, and therefore no value, unless there is freedom to feel and say. The tracing of a line to be followed, of a tone to be taken, of a form to be filled out, is a limitation of that freedom and a suppression of the very thing that we are most curious about.

—from his "The Art of Fiction" (1884)

Henry James (1843-1916) helps in his subtle way to lead us from the 19th into the 20th century, just as he leads us from America to Europe. His principal interest, especially in his many fine novels, is the confrontation of American and European culture. He is also concerned with the clash between the old and the new, between the dying century and the one just beginning.

James was born in New York City, the second child of wealthy, somewhat aristocratic parents. His father, Henry James, Sr., was a philosopher and a friend of Emerson's; his brother William became a prominent philosopher and psychologist. Henry James, Sr. disapproved of most schools and consequently, sent his sons to a variety of tutors and European schools in search of the best education for them. The children received the major part of their education at home, however, in lively conversations with their father and the other children. The James family's travels in Europe were another source of education for Henry.

When he was growing up in New York, Henry was given a great deal of independence, so much in fact, that he felt isolated from other people. A quiet child among exuberant brothers and cousins, Henry was more often an observer than a participant in their activities. When, as a young man, a back injury prevented his fighting in the Civil War, he felt even more excluded from the events of his time. While the adult Henry James developed many close friendships, he retained his attitude of observer, and devoted much of his life to solitary work on his writing.

Henry's family lived for a time in Boston, where he became acquainted with New England authors and friends of his

father, began his friendship with William Dean Howells, and attended Harvard Law School. After 1866, James lived in Europe much of the time and in 1875 decided to make it his permanent home. He lived in Paris for a year, where he met Turgenev, Flaubert, and Zola. The next year he settled in London and lived there and in the English countryside for the rest of his life. In 1915, a year before his death, to show his support of England in World War I, James became a British citizen.

Henry James first achieved recognition as a writer of the "international novel"—a story which brings together persons of various nationalities who represent certain characteristics of their country. The Europeans in James' novels are more cultured, more concerned with art, and more aware of the subtleties of social situations than are James' Americans. The Americans, however, usually have a morality and innocence which the Europeans lack. James seemed to value both the sophistication of Europe and the idealism of America.

Of the prominent New England writers who had dominated American literature, James preferred Hawthorne, with his recognition of the evil present in the world, to the Transcendentalists, whose optimism seemed unrealistic to him. James' later books put less emphasis on the international theme and are more concerned with the psychology of his characters. His most mature, and perhaps his best, novels are considered to be his last three: *The Golden Bowl*, *The Ambassadors*, and *The Wings of the Dove*. James himself considered *The Ambassadors* his best work.

SELECTION I

Lambert Strether, the central character in *The Ambassadors*, is a throughly decent American from a Massachusetts milltown, who is sent to Paris by the town's society leader, a Mrs. Newsome, to bring her restless son Chad back from the decadence of Europe. The decadence is typified by a delightful French countess, Madame de Vionnet. As Strether goes about his mission in Paris, he finds life there far more complicated than in Massachusetts. His perceptions are deepened by an attractive American expatriate, Maria Gostrey, by another American named Waymarsh, and by Chad Newsome himself. Strether soon sees that the countess has been a civilizing influence on Chad and that there is much to be said for European culture.

When Mrs. Newsome realizes that Strether is being subverted, she sends over reinforcements, principally her stiff daughter, Mrs. Pocock. The scene excerpted here is the meeting between Sarah Pocock and Madame de Vionnet, with Strether and Waymarsh playing supporting roles. To get the most out of the brilliant interplay of personalities which James creates, we must read closely. The lines are not only subtle but systematically understated. What we see on the surface is a polite social call by the countess on Mrs. Pocock; underneath, it is really a skirmish in a total war. The "him" in the first sentence is Strether.

From The Ambassadors
Book 8, section 3

As the door of Mrs. Pocock's salon was pushed open for him, the next day, well before noon, he was reached by a voice with a charming sound that made him just falter before crossing the threshold. Madame de Vionnet was already on the field, and this gave the drama a quicker pace than he felt it as yet—though his suspense had increased—in the power of any act of his own to do. He had spent the previous evening with all his old friends together; yet he would still have described himself as quite in the dark in respect to a forecast of their influence on his situation. It was strange now, none the less, that in the light of this unexpected note of her presence he felt Madame de Vionnet a

part of that situation as she hadn't even yet been. She was alone, he found himself assuming, with Sarah, and there was a bearing in that—somehow beyond his control—on his personal fate. Yet she was only saying something quite easy and independent—the thing she had come, as a good friend of Chad's, on purpose to say. "There isn't anything at all—? I should be so delighted."

It was clear enough, when they were there before him, how she had been received. He saw this, as Sarah got up to greet him, from something fairly hectic in Sarah's face. He saw furthermore that they weren't, as had first come to him, alone together; he was at no loss as to the identity of the broad high back presented to him in the embrasure of the window furthest from the door. Waymarsh, whom he had to-day not yet seen, whom he only knew to have left the hotel before him, and who had taken part, the night previous, on Mrs. Pocock's kind invitation, conveyed by Chad, in the entertainment, informal but cordial, promptly offered by that lady —Waymarsh had anticipated him even as Madame de Vionnet had done, and, with his hands in his pockets and his attitude unaffected by Strether's entrance, was looking out, in marked detachment, at the Rue de Rivoli. The latter felt it in the air—it was immense how Waymarsh could mark things—that he had remained deeply dissociated from the overture to their hostess that we have recorded on Madame de Vionnet's side. He had, conspicuously, tact, besides a stiff general view; and this was why he had left Mrs. Pocock to struggle alone. He would outstay the visitor; he would unmistakeably wait; to what had he been doomed for months past but waiting? Therefore she was to feel that she had him in reserve. What support she drew from this was still to be seen, for, although Sarah was vividly bright, she had given herself up for the moment to an ambiguous flushed formalism. She had had to reckon more quickly than she expected; but it concerned her first of all to signify that she was not to be taken unawares. Strether arrived precisely in time for her showing it. "Oh you're too good; but I don't think I feel quite helpless. I have my brother—and these American friends. And then you know I've been to Paris. I *know* Paris," said Sally Pocock in a tone that breathed a certain chill on Strether's heart.

"Ah but a woman, in this tiresome place where everything's always changing, a woman of good will," Madame de Vionnet threw off, "can always help a woman. I'm sure you 'know'—but we know perhaps different things." She too, visibly, wished to make no mistake; but it was a fear of a different order and more kept out of sight. She smiled in welcome at Strether; she greeted him more familiarly than Mrs. Pocock; she put out her hand to him without moving from her place; and it came to him in the course of a minute and in the oddest way that—yes, positively—she was giving him over to ruin. She was all kindness and ease, but she couldn't help so giving him; she was exquisite, and her being just as she was poured for Sarah a sudden rush of meaning into his own equivocations. How could she know how she was hurting him? She wanted to show as simple and humble—in the degree compatible with operative charm; but it was just this that seemed to put him on her side. She struck him as dressed, as arranged, as prepared infinitely to conciliate—with the very poetry of good taste in her view of the conditions of her early call. She was ready to advise about dressmakers and shops; she held herself wholly at the disposition of Chad's family. Strether noticed her card on the table—her coronet and her

"Comtesse"[1]—and the imagination was sharp in him of certain private adjustments in Sarah's mind. She had never, he was sure, sat with a "Comtesse" before, and such was the specimen of that class he had been keeping to play on her. She had crossed the sea very particularly for a look at her; but he read in Madame de Vionnet's own eyes that this curiosity hadn't been so successfully met as that she herself wouldn't now have more than ever need of him. She looked much as she had looked to him that morning at Notre Dame;[2] he noted in fact the suggestive sameness of her discreet and delicate dress. It seemed to speak—perhaps a little prematurely or too finely—of the sense in which she would help Mrs. Pocock with the shops. The way that lady took her in, moreover, added depth to his impression of what Miss Gostrey, by their common wisdom, had escaped. He winced as he saw himself but for that timely prudence ushering in Maria as a guide and an example. There was however a touch of relief for him in his glimpse, so far as he had got it, of Sarah's line. She "knew Paris." Madame de Vionnet had, for that matter, lightly taken this up. "Ah then you've a turn for that, an affinity that belongs to your family. Your brother, though his long experience makes a difference, I admit, has become one of us in a marvellous way." And she appealed to Strether in the manner of a woman who could always glide off with smoothness into another subject. Wasn't *he* struck with the way Mr. Newsome had made the place his own, and hadn't he been in a position to profit by his friend's wondrous expertness?

Strether felt the bravery, at the least, of her presenting herself so promptly to sound that note, and yet asked himself what other note, after all, she *could* strike from the moment she presented herself at all. She could meet Mrs. Pocock only on the ground of the obvious, and what feature of Chad's situation was more eminent than the fact that he had created for himself a new set of circumstances? Unless she hid herself altogether she could show but as one of these, an illustration of his domiciled and indeed of his confirmed condition. And the consciousness of all this in her charming eyes was so clear and fine that as she thus publicly drew him into her boat she produced in him such a silent agitation as he was not to fail afterwards to denounce as pusillanimous. "Ah don't be so charming to me!—for it makes us intimate, and after all what *is* between us when I've been so tremendously on my guard and have seen you but half a dozen times?" He recognised once more the perverse law that so inveterately governed his poor personal aspects: it would be exactly *like* the way things always turned out for him that he should affect Mrs. Pocock and Waymarsh as launched in a relation in which he had really never been launched at all. They were at this very moment —they could only be—attributing to him the full licence of it, and all by the operation of her own tone with him; whereas his sole licence had been to cling with intensity to the brink, not to dip so much as a toe into the flood. But the flicker of his fear on this occasion was not, as may be added, to repeat itself; it sprang up, for its moment, only to die down and then go out for ever. To meet his fellow visitor's invocation and, with Sarah's brilliant eyes on him, answer, *was* quite sufficiently to step into her boat. During the rest of the time her visit lasted he felt himself proceed to each of the proper offices, successively,

1. Comtesse—countess (French)
2. Notre Dame—a famous early Gothic cathedral in Paris

for helping to keep the adventurous skiff afloat. It rocked beneath him, but he settled himself in his place. He took up an oar and, since he was to have the credit of pulling, pulled.

"That will make it all the pleasanter if it so happens that we *do* meet," Madame de Vionnet had further observed in reference to Mrs. Pocock's mention of her initiated state; and she had immediately added that, after all, her hostess couldn't be in need with the good offices of Mr. Strether so close at hand. "It's he, I gather, who has learnt to know his Paris, and to love it, better than any one ever before in so short a time; so that between him and your brother, when it comes to the point, how can you possibly want for good guidance? The great thing, Mr. Strether will show you," she smiled, "is just to let one's self go."

"Oh I've not let myself go very far," Strether answered, feeling quite as if he had been called upon to hint to Mrs. Pocock how Parisians could talk. "I'm only afraid of showing I haven't let myself go far enough. I've taken a good deal of time, but I must quite have had the air of not budging from one spot." He looked at Sarah in a manner that he thought she might take as engaging, and he made, under Madame de Vionnet's protection, as it were, his first personal point. "What has really happened has been that, all the while, I've done what I came out for."

Yet it only at first gave Madame de Vionnet a chance immediately to take him up. "You've renewed acquaintance with your friend—you've learnt to know him again." She spoke with such cheerful helpfulness that they might, in a common cause, have been calling together and pledged to mutual aid.

Waymarsh, at this, as if he had been in question, straightway turned from the window. "Oh yes, Countess—he has renewed acquaintance with *me*, and he *has*, I guess, learnt something about me, though I don't know how much he has liked it. It's for Strether himself to say whether he has felt it justifies his course."

"Oh but *you*," said the Countess gaily, "are not in the least what he came out for—is he really, Strether? and I hadn't you at all in my mind. I was thinking of Mr. Newsome, of whom we think so much and with whom, precisely, Mrs. Pocock has given herself the opportunity to take up threads. What a pleasure for you both!" Madame de Vionnet, with her eyes on Sarah, bravely continued.

Mrs. Pocock met her handsomely, but Strether quickly saw she meant to accept no version of her movements or plans from any other lips. She required no patronage and no support, which were but other names for a false position; she would show in her own way what she chose to show, and this she expressed with a dry glitter that recalled to him a fine Woollett winter morning. "I've never wanted for opportunities to see my brother. We've many things to think of at home, and great responsibilities and occupations, and our home's not an impossible place. We've plenty of reasons," Sarah continued a little piercingly, "for everything we do"—and in short she wouldn't give herself the least little scrap away. But she added as one who was always bland and who could afford a concession: "I've come because—well, because we do come."

"Ah then fortunately!"—Madame de Vionnet breathed it to the air. Five minutes later they were on their feet for her to take leave, standing together in an affability that had succeeded in surviving a further exchange of remarks; only with the emphasised appearance on Waymarsh's part of a tendency to revert, in a

ruminating manner and as with an instinctive or a precautionary lightening of his tread, to an open window and his point of vantage. The glazed and gilded room, all red damask, ormolu, mirrors, clocks, looked south, and the shutters were bowed upon the summer morning; but the Tuileries[3] garden and what was beyond it, over which the whole place hung, were things visible through gaps; so that the far-spreading presence of Paris came up in coolness, dimness and invitation, in the twinkle of gilt-tipped palings, the crunch of gravel, the click of hoofs, the crack of whips, things that suggested some parade of the circus. "I think it probable," said Mrs. Pocock, "that I shall have the opportunity of going to my brother's. I've no doubt it's very pleasant indeed." She spoke as to Strether, but her face was turned with an intensity of brightness to Madame de Vionnet, and there was a moment during which, while she thus fronted her, our friend expected to hear her add: "I'm much obliged to you, I'm sure, for inviting me there." He guessed that for five seconds these words were on the point of coming; he heard them as clearly as if they had been spoken; but he presently knew they had just failed—knew it by a glance, quick and fine, from Madame de Vionnet, which told him that she too had felt them in the air, but that the point had luckily not been made in any manner requiring notice. This left her free to reply only to what had been said.

"That the Boulevard Malesherbes may be common ground for us offers me the best prospect I see for the pleasure of meeting you again."

"Oh I shall come to see you, since you've been so good": and Mrs. Pocock looked her invader well in the eyes. The flush in Sarah's cheeks had by this time settled to a small definite crimson spot that was not without its own bravery; she held her head a good deal up, and it came to Strether that of the two, at this moment, she was the one who most carried out the idea of a Countess. He quite took in, however, that she would really return her visitor's civility; she wouldn't report again at Woollett without at least so much producible history as that in her pocket.

"I want extremely to be able to show you my little daughter," Madame de Vionnet went on; "and I should have brought her with me if I hadn't wished first to ask your leave. I was in hopes I should perhaps find Miss Pocock, of whose being with you I've heard from Mr. Newsome and whose acquaintance I should so much like my child to make. If I have the pleasure of seeing her and you do permit it I shall venture to ask her to be kind to Jeanne. Mr. Strether will tell you"—she beautifully kept it up—"that my poor girl is gentle and good and rather lonely. They've made friends, he and she, ever so happily, and he doesn't, I believe, think ill of her. As for Jeanne herself he has had the same success with her that I know he has had here wherever he has turned." She seemed to ask him for permission to say these things, or seemed rather to take it, softly and happily, with the ease of intimacy, for granted, and he had quite the consciousness now that not to meet her at any point more than halfway would be odiously, basely to abandon her. Yes, he was *with* her, and, opposed even in this covert, this semi-safe fashion to those who were not, he felt, strangely and confusedly, but excitedly, inspiringly, how much and how far. It was as if he had positively waited in suspense for something from her that would let him in deeper, so that he might show her how he could take it. And what did in fact come as

3. Tuileries—a former royal residence in Paris

she drew out a little her farewell served sufficiently the purpose. "As his success is a matter that I'm sure he'll never mention for himself, I feel, you see, the less scruple; which it's very good of me to say, you know, by the way," she added as she addressed herself to him; "considering how little direct advantage I've gained from your triumphs with *me*. When does one ever see you? I wait at home and I languish. You'll have rendered me the service, Mrs. Pocock, at least," she wound up, "of giving me one of my much-too-rare glimpses of this gentleman."

"I certainly should be sorry to deprive you of anything that seems so much, as you describe it, your natural due. Mr. Strether and I are very old friends," Sarah allowed, "but the privilege of his society isn't a thing I shall quarrel about with any one."...

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the signs that Strether sees which show him that the battle had already begun before he came in?

2. What is the stated purpose of the Countess' visit? Is it the real reason she has come? Explain.

3. How does Mrs. Pocock reveal her feelings?

4. What role does Waymarsh play in this episode?

5. What kind of person is the Countess? Mrs. Pocock?

6. How do you explain Strether's being steadily won to the Countess' side?

7. At one point in the account, Strether thinks to himself, concerning Madame de Vionnet: "Ah don't be so charming to me!—for it makes us intimate. . ." Explain what he means by that observation.

8. What is Strether's reaction to the Countess' comment that he has let himself go?

9. How does Mrs. Pocock snub the Countess?

10. Sarah explains her reason for coming to Paris: "I've come because—well, because we do come." What does she mean?

11. Does Madame de Vionnet appeal to Strether for help? If so, how?

12. As the scene goes along, who gets more of your sympathy, Mrs. Pocock or Madame de Vionnet? Why?

THE AMERICAN SHORT STORY: 19TH CENTURY DEVELOPMENTS

From the beginning of time, man has been interested in stories. For many thousands of years stories were passed from generation to generation orally, either in words or in song. Usually the stories were religious or national in character. There were myths, epics, fables, and parables. Some famous examples of story-telling of the Middle Ages are *A Thousand and One nights*, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, and Boccaccio's *Decameron*.

Perhaps it can be said that the short story is well-suited to American life style and character. It is brief. (It can be read usually in a single sitting.) It is concentrated. (The characters are few in number and the action is limited.)

Dr. J. Berg Esenwein in his book, *Writing the Short Story*, defines the short story as follows: "*A short story is a brief, imaginative narrative, unfolding a single predominating incident and a single chief character, it contains a plot, the details of which are so compressed, and the whole treatment so organized, as to produce a single impression.*"

A good short story should (1) narrate an account of events in a way that will hold the reader's interest by its basic truth; and (2) it should present a struggle or conflict faced by a character or characters. The plot is the narrative development of the struggle as it moves through a series of crises to the final outcome. The outcome must be the inevitable result of the traits of the character involved in the struggle or conflict.

The short story is the literary form to which the United States made early contributions. In fact, early in 19th century America, the short story reached a significant point in its development. Three American writers were responsible for this development: Nathaniel Hawthorne, Washington Irving, and Edgar Allan Poe. It was the latter who defined the literary form in his review of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*.

In this review, Poe asserts that everything in a story or tale— every incident, every combination of events, every word—must aid the author in achieving a preconceived emotional effect. He states that since the ordinary novel cannot be read at one sitting, it is deprived of "the immense force derivable from *totality*." For Poe the advantage of the short prose narrative over the novel was that it maintained unity of interest on the part of the reader, who was less subject to the intervention of "wordly interests" caused by pauses or cessation of reading as in the case of a novel.

"In the brief tale, however," Poe states, "the author is enabled to carry out the fullness of his intentions, be it what may. During the hour of perusual the soul of the reader is at the writer's control. There are no external or extrinsic influences—resulting from weariness or interruption."

Poe felt that the writer of short stories should conceive his stories with deliberate care in order to achieve "a certain unique or single *effect*," beginning with the initial sentence of the story. According to Poe, the short story writer should not form his thoughts to accommodate his incidents, and thereby destroy the possibility of establishing the pre-conceived single effect, so much desired.

Four famous American short stories from the 19th century are included in this section. The choice is not specifically representative of the many types of short stories nor do the stories necessarily demonstrate the most outstanding stories by each author. They are, however, among the most well-known and enjoyed by the average American reader.

CHAPTER XVII

AMBROSE BIERCE

AMBROSE BIERCE (1842-1914?)

Ambrose Bierce was born on a farm in Ohio when it was still frontier. As a boy he had little opportunity for a formal education but was able to educate himself by reading books in his father's personal library. With the outbreak of the Civil War, he joined the Union Army and was severely wounded twice during his four years of service. He attained the rank of major and was commended for gallantry in action.

After the war Bierce took a job on a newspaper in San Francisco as editor of the *News Letter*. In 1872 he went to London and while there wrote three small books, *Nuggets and Dust* (1872), *The Fiend's Delight* (1873), and *Cobwebs and Dust* (1874). The sharp sarcasm and bitter humor of these volumes earned him the nickname "Bitter Bierce."

After four years in England, Bierce returned to San Francisco where he worked as a newspaper columnist for 25 years. Because of his often outspoken views and opinions, he became a somewhat controversial figure in the politics of the area.

When past seventy years of age, Bierce went to Mexico on a mysterious mission in 1913 and disappeared. Some believe that he was killed by Mexican revolutionaries between 1914 and 1916.

Ambrose Bierce was a master in telling stories dealing with the supernatural. Many of his best short stories are characterized by horror and terror. "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" is a good example of Bierce's ability to create a mood of horror from which he moves to a powerful climax and denouement.

An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge

A man stood upon a railroad bridge in northern Alabama, looking down into the swift water twenty feet below. The man's hands were behind his back, the wrists bound with a cord. A rope loosely encircled his neck. It was attached to a stout cross-timber above his head, and the slack fell to the level of his knees. Some loose boards laid upon the sleepers supporting the metals of the railway supplied a footing for him and his executioners—two private soldiers of the Federal army, directed by a sergeant who in civil life may have been a deputy sheriff. At a short remove upon the same temporary platform was an officer in the uniform of his rank, armed. He was a captain. A sentinel at each end of the bridge stood with his rifle in the position known as "support," that is to say, vertical in front of the left shoulder, the hammer resting on the forearm thrown straight across the chest—a formal and unnatural position, enforcing an erect carriage of the body. It did not appear to be the duty of these two men to know what was occurring at the center of the bridge; they merely blockaded the two ends of the foot plank which traversed it.

Beyond one of the sentinels, nobody was in sight; the railroad ran straight away into a forest for a hundred yards, then, curving, was lost to view. Doubtless there was an outpost farther along. The other bank of the stream was open ground—a gentle acclivity topped with a stockade of vertical tree trunks, loopholed for rifles, with a single embrasure through which protruded the muzzle of a brass cannon commanding the bridge. Midway of the slope between bridge and fort were the spectators—a single company of infantry in line, at "parade rest," the butts of the rifles on the ground, the barrels inclining slightly backward against the right shoulder, the hands crossed upon the stock. A lieutenant stood at the right of the line, the

point of his sword upon the ground, his left hand resting upon his right. Excepting the group of four at the center of the bridge, not a man moved. The company faced the bridge, staring stonily, motionless. The sentinels, facing the banks of the stream, might have been statues to adorn the bridge. The captain stood with folded arms, silent, observing the work of his subordinates, but making no sign. Death is a dignitary who when he comes announced is to be received with formal manifestations of respect, even by those most familiar with him. In the code of military etiquette silence and fixity are forms of deference.

The man who was engaged in being hanged was apparently about thirty-five years of age. He was a civilian, if one might judge from his habit, which was that of a planter. His features were good—a straight nose, firm mouth, broad forehead, from which his long, dark hair was combed straight back, falling behind his ears to the collar of his well-fitting frock coat. He wore a mustache and pointed beard, but no whiskers; his eyes were large and dark gray, and had a kindly expression which one would hardly have expected in one whose neck was in the hemp. Evidently this was no vulgar assassin. The liberal military code makes provision for hanging many kinds of persons, and gentlemen are not excluded.

The preparations being complete, the two private soldiers stepped aside and each drew away the plank upon which he had been standing. The sergeant turned to the captain, saluted, and placed himself immediately behind that officer, who in turn moved apart one pace. These movements left the condemned man and the sergeant standing on the two ends of the same plank, which spanned three of the crossties of the bridge. The end upon which the civilian stood almost, but not quite, reached a fourth. This plank had been held in place by the weight of the captain; it was now held by that of the sergeant. At a signal from the former, the latter would step aside, the plank would tilt, and the condemned man go down between two ties. The arrangement commended itself to his judgment as simple and effective. His face had not been covered nor his eyes bandaged. He looked a moment at his "unsteadfast footing," then let his gaze wander to the swirling water of the stream racing madly beneath his feet. A piece of dancing driftwood caught his attention and his eyes followed it down the current. How slowly it appeared to move! What a sluggish stream!

He closed his eyes in order to fix his last thoughts upon his wife and children. The water, touched to gold by the early sun, the brooding mists under the banks at some distance down the stream, the fort, the soldiers, the piece of drift—all had distracted him. And now he became conscious of a new disturbance. Striking through the thought of his dear ones was a sound which he could neither ignore nor understand, a sharp, distinct, metallic percussion like the stroke of a blacksmith's hammer upon the anvil; it had the same ringing quality. He wondered what it was, and whether immeasurably distant or near by—it seemed both. Its recurrence was regular, but as slow as the tolling of a death knell. He awaited each stroke with impatience and—he knew not why—apprehension. The intervals of silence grew progressively longer; the delays became maddening. With their greater infrequency the sounds increased in strength and sharpness. They hurt his ear like the thrust of a knife; he feared he would shriek. What he heard was the ticking of his watch.

He unclosed his eyes and saw again the water below him. "If I could free my hands," he thought, "I might throw off the noose and spring into the stream. By diving I could evade the bullets and, swimming vigorously, reach the bank, take to the woods, and get away home. My home, thank God, is as yet outside their lines; my wife and little ones are still beyond the invader's farthest advance."

As these thoughts, which have here to be set down in words, were flashed into the doomed man's brain rather than evolved from it, the captain nodded to the sergeant. The sergeant stepped aside

II

Peyton Farquhar was a well-to-do planter of an old and highly respected Alabama family. Being a slave owner and like other slave owners a politician, he was naturally an original secessionist and ardently devoted to the Southern cause. Circumstances of an imperious nature, which it is unnecessary to relate here, had prevented him from taking service with the gallant army which had fought the disastrous campaigns ending with the fall of Corinth, and he chafed under the inglorious restraint, longing for the release of his energies, the larger life of the soldier, the opportunity for distinction. That opportunity, he felt, would come, as it comes to all in war time. Meanwhile he did what he could. No service was too humble for him to perform in aid of the South, no adventure too perilous for him to undertake if consistent with the character of a civilian who was at heart a soldier, and who in good faith and without too much qualification assented to at least a part of the frankly villainous dictum that all is fair in love and war.

One evening while Farquhar and his wife were sitting on a rustic bench near the entrance to his grounds, a gray-clad soldier rode up to the gate and asked for a drink of water. Mrs. Farquhar was only too happy to serve him with her own white hands. While she was fetching the water her husband approached the dusty horseman and inquired eagerly for news from the front.

"The Yanks are repairing the railroads," said the man, "and are getting ready for another advance. They have reached the Owl Creek bridge, put it in order, and built a stockade on the north bank. The commandant has issued an order, which is posted everywhere, declaring that any civilian caught interfering with the railroad, its bridges, tunnels, or trains will be summarily hanged. I saw the order."

"How far is it to the Owl Creek bridge?" Farquhar asked.

"About thirty miles."

"Is there no force on this side the creek?"

"Only a picket post half a mile out, on the railroad, and a single sentinel at this end of the bridge."

"Suppose a man—a civilian and student of hanging—should elude the picket post and perhaps get the better of the sentinel," said Farquhar, smiling, "what could he accomplish?"

The soldier reflected. "I was there a month ago," he replied. "I observed that the flood of last winter had lodged a great quantity of driftwood against the wooden pier at this end of the bridge. It is now dry and would burn like tow."

The lady had now brought the water, which the soldier drank. He thanked her ceremoniously, bowed to her husband, and rode away. An hour later, after nightfall, he repassed the plantation, going northward in the direction from which he had come. He was a Federal scout.

III

As Peyton Farquhar fell straight downward through the bridge he lost consciousness and was as one already dead. From this state he was awakened—ages later, it seemed to him—by the pain of a sharp pressure upon his throat, followed by a sense of suffocation. Keen, poignant agonies seemed to shoot from his neck downward through every fiber of his body and limbs. These pains appeared to flash along well-defined lines of ramification and to beat with an inconceivably rapid periodicity. They seemed like streams of pulsating fire heating him to an intolerable temperature. As to his head, he was conscious of nothing but a feeling of fullness —of congestion. These sensations were unaccompanied by thought. The intellectual part of his nature was already effaced; he had power only to feel, and feeling was torment. He was conscious of motion. Encompassed in a luminous cloud, of which he was now merely the fiery heart, without material substance, he swung through unthinkable arcs of oscillation, like a vast pendulum. Then all at once, with terrible suddenness, the light about him shot upward with the noise of a loud plash; a frightful roaring was in his ears, and all was cold and dark. The power of thought was restored; he knew that the rope had broken and he had fallen into the stream. There was no additional strangulation; the noose about his neck was already suffocating him and kept the water from his lungs. To die of hanging at the bottom of a river!—the idea seemed to him ludicrous. He opened his eyes in the darkness and saw above him a gleam of light, but how distant, how inaccessible! He was still sinking, for the light became fainter and fainter until it was a mere glimmer. Then it began to grow and brighten, and he knew that he was rising toward the surface—knew it with reluctance, for he was now very comfortable. "To be hanged and drowned," he thought, "that is not so bad; but I do not wish to be shot. No; I will not be shot; that is not fair."

He was not conscious of an effort, but a sharp pain in his wrist apprised him that he was trying to free his hands. He gave the struggle his attention, as an idler might observe the feat of a juggler, without interest in the outcome. What splendid effort!—what magnificent, what superhuman strength! Ah, that was a fine endeavor! Bravo! The cord fell away; his arms parted and floated upward, the hand dimly seen on each side in the growing light. He watched them with a new interest as first one and then the other pounced upon the noose at his neck. They tore it away and thrust it fiercely aside, its undulations resembling those of a water snake. "Put it back, put it back!" He thought he shouted these words to his hands, for the undoing of the noose had been succeeded by the direst pang that he had yet experienced. His neck ached horribly; his brain was on fire; his heart, which had been fluttering faintly, gave a great leap, trying to force itself out at his mouth. His whole body was racked and wrenched with an insupportable anguish! But his disobedient hands gave no heed to the command. They beat the water vigorously with quick downward strokes, forcing him to the surface. He felt his head emerge; his eyes were blinded by the sunlight; his chest expanded convulsively, and with a supreme and crowning agony his lungs engulfed a great draught of air, which instantly he expelled in a shriek!

He was now in full possession of his physical senses. They were, indeed, preternaturally keen and alert. Something in

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the awful disturbances of his organic system had so exalted and refined them that they made record of things never before perceived. He felt the ripples upon his face and heard their separate sounds as they struck. He looked at the forest on the bank of the stream, saw the individual trees, the leaves and the veining of each leaf—saw the very insects upon them: the locusts, the brilliant-bodied flies, the gray spiders stretching their webs from twig to twig. He noted the prismatic colors in all the dewdrops upon a million blades of grass. The humming of the gnats that danced above the eddies of the stream, the beating of the dragonflies' wings, the strokes of the water spiders' legs, like oars which had lifted their boat—all these made audible music. A fish slid along beneath his eyes and he heard the rush of its body parting the water.

He had come to the surface facing down the stream; in a moment the visible world seemed to wheel slowly round, himself the pivotal point, and he saw the bridge, the fort, the soldiers upon the bridge, the captain, the sergeant, the two privates, his executioners. They were in silhouette against the blue sky. They shouted and gesticulated, pointing at him. The captain had drawn his pistol, but did not fire; the others were unarmed. Their movements were grotesque and horrible, their forms gigantic.

Suddenly he heard a sharp report and something struck the water smartly within a few inches of his head, spattering his face with spray. He heard a second report, and saw one of the sentinels with his rifle at his shoulder, a light cloud of blue smoke rising from the muzzle. The man in the water saw the eye of the man on the bridge gazing into his own through the sights of the rifle. He observed that it was a gray eye and remembered having read that gray eyes were keenest, and that all famous marksmen had them. Nevertheless, this one had missed.

A counterswirl had caught Farquhar and turned him half round; he was again looking into the forest on the bank opposite the fort. The sound of a clear, high voice in a monotonous singsong now rang out behind him and came across the water with a distinctness that pierced and subdued all other sounds, even the beating of the ripples in his ears. Although no soldier, he had frequented camps enough to know the dread significance of that deliberate, drawling, aspirated chant; the lieutenant on shore was taking a part in the morning's work. How coldly and pitilessly—with what an even, calm intonation, presaging and enforcing tranquillity in the men—with what accurately measured intervals fell those cruel words:

"Attention, company! . . . Shoulder arms! . . . Ready! . . . Aim! . . . Fire!"

Farquhar dived—dived as deeply as he could. The water roared in his ears like the voice of Niagara, yet he heard the dulled thunder of the volley and, rising again toward the surface, met shining bits of metal, singularly flattened, oscillating slowly downward. Some of them touched him on the face and hands, then fell away, continuing their descent. One lodged between his collar and neck; it was uncomfortably warm and he snatched it out.

As he rose to the surface, gasping for breath, he saw that he had been a long time under water; he was perceptibly farther downstream—nearer to safety. The soldiers had almost finished reloading; the metal ramrods flashed all at once in the sunshine as they were drawn from the barrels, turned in the air, and thrust into their sockets. The two sentinels fired again, independently and ineffectually.

The hunted man saw all this over his

shoulder; he was now swimming vigorously with the current. His brain was as energetic as his arms and legs; he thought with the rapidity of lightning.

"The officer," he reasoned, "will not make that martinet's error a second time. It is as easy to dodge a volley as a single shot. He has probably already given the command to fire at will. God help me, I cannot dodge them all!"

An appalling plash within two yards of him was followed by a loud, rushing sound, *diminuendo*, which seemed to travel back through the air to the fort and died in an explosion which stirred the very river to its deeps! A rising sheet of water, which curved over him, fell down upon him, blinded him, strangled him! The cannon had taken a hand in the game. As he shook his head free from the commotion of the smitten water, he heard the deflected shot humming through the air ahead, and in an instant it was cracking and smashing the branches in the forest beyond.

"They will not do that again," he thought; "the next time they will use a charge of grape. I must keep my eye upon the gun; the smoke will apprise me—the report arrives too late; it lags behind the missile. That is a good gun."

Suddenly he felt himself whirled round and round—spinning like a top. The water, the banks, the forests, the now distant bridge, fort, and men—all were commingled and blurred. Objects were represented by their colors only; circular horizontal streaks of color—that was all he saw. He had been caught in a vortex and was being whirled on with a velocity of advance and gyration which made him giddy and sick. In a few moments he was flung upon the gravel at the foot of the left bank of the stream—the southern bank—and behind a projecting point which concealed him from his enemies. The sudden arrest of his motion, the abrasion of one of his hands on the gravel, restored him, and he wept with delight. He dug his fingers into the sand, threw it over himself in handfuls, and audibly blessed it. It looked like diamond, rubies, emeralds; he could think of nothing beautiful which it did not resemble. The trees upon the bank were giant garden plants; he noted a definite order in their arrangement, inhaled the fragrance of their blooms. A strange, roseate light shone through the spaces among their trunks and the wind made in their branches the music of aeolian harps. He had no wish to perfect his escape—was content to remain in that enchanting spot until retaken.

A whiz and rattle of grapeshot among the branches high above his head roused him from his dream. The baffled cannoneer had fired him a random farewell. He sprang to his feet, rushed up the sloping bank, and plunged into the forest.

All that day he traveled, laying his course by the rounding sun. The forest seemed interminable; nowhere did he discover a break in it, not even a woodman's road. He had not known that he lived in so wild a region. There was something uncanny in the revelation.

By nightfall he was fatigued, footsore, famishing. The thought of his wife and children urged him on. At last he found a road which led him in what he knew to be the right direction. It was as wide and straight as a city street, yet it seemed untraveled. No fields bordered it, no dwelling anywhere. Not so much as the barking of a dog suggested human habitation. The black bodies of the trees formed a straight wall on both sides, terminating on the horizon in a point, like a diagram in a lesson in perspective. Overhead, as he looked up through this rift in the wood, shone

great golden stars looking unfamiliar and grouped in strange constellations. He was sure they were arranged in some order which had a secret and malign significance. The wood on either side was full of singular noises, among which—once, twice, and again—he distinctly heard whispers in an unknown tongue.

His neck was in pain and lifting his hand to it he found it horribly swollen. He knew that it had a circle of black where the rope had bruised it. His eyes felt congested; he could no longer close them. His tongue was swollen with thirst; he relieved its fever by thrusting it forward from between his teeth into the cold air. How softly the turf has carpeted the untraveled avenue—he could no longer feel the roadway beneath his feet!

Doubtless, despite his suffering, he had fallen asleep while walking, for now he sees another scene—perhaps he has merely recovered from a delirium. He stands at the gate of his own home. All is as he left it, and all bright and beautiful in the morning sunshine. He must have traveled the entire night. As he pushes open the gate and passes up the wide white walk, he sees a flutter of female garments; his wife, looking fresh and cool and sweet, steps down from the veranda to meet him. At the bottom of the steps she stands waiting, with a smile of ineffable joy, an attitude of matchless grace and dignity. Ah, how beautiful she is! He springs forward with extended arms. As he is about to clasp her, he feels a stunning blow upon the back of his neck; a blinding white light blazes all about him with a sound like the shock of a cannon—then all is darkness and silence!

Peyton Farquhar was dead; his body, with a broken neck, swung gently from side to side beneath the timbers of the Owl Creek bridge.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the author succeed in drawing the reader quickly into the event about to take place?
2. What do we learn about the man being hanged?
3. How does the author intensify the sense of waiting?
4. What circumstances led to the capture of Peyton Farquhar?
5. How much time passes in the story?
6. How do you account for Farquhar's sensation that he had fallen into the stream?
7. Do you think that thoughts continue in one's brain after death? Discuss.
8. The third paragraph suggests the author's attitude toward the hanging. What is it? Cite words or phrases in the paragraph to support your answer.
9. Does the author hint during the story that the escape is only the vision of a dying man? If so, how?
10. Do you think the author has achieved Poe's "certain unique or single effect" in the story? Give reasons for your answer.
11. What do you like most about Ambrose Bierce as a storyteller? What do you dislike most?
12. What part of the story did you find most vivid?

WRITING PRACTICE

Prepare a written composition of about 150-200 words in which you discuss the following statement found in the story:

Death is a dignitary who when he comes announced is to be received with formal manifestations of respect even by those most familiar with him.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Write a comparison of the writing styles of Ambrose Bierce and Frank R. Stockton *(The Lady or the Tiger)* in which you apply some of the criteria set down by Edgar Allan Poe in his review of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*. (See essay on *The American Short Story* found at the beginning of this section.)

CHAPTER XVIII

STEPHEN CRANE

STEPHEN CRANE

"The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" is one of Crane's most celebrated and widely read tales. The story clearly demonstrates his power of imagination, his ability to make characters come alive, and his "knack" for creating the background details which are necessary to lend realism to the conditions under which his characters live.

(See section entitled Romanticism and Realism for more biographical information on Crane.)

The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky

I

The great Pullman was whirling onward with such dignity of motion that a glance from the window seemed simply to prove that the plains of Texas were pouring eastward. Vast flats of green grass, dull-hued spaces of mesquite and cactus, little groups of frame houses, woods of light and tender trees, all were sweeping into the east, sweeping over the horizon, a precipice.

A newly married pair had boarded this coach at San Antonio. The man's face was reddened from many days in the wind and sun, and a direct result of his new black clothes was that his brick-coloured hands were constantly performing in a most conscious fashion. From time to time he looked down respectfully at his attire. He sat with a hand on each knee, like a man waiting in a barber's shop. The glances he devoted to other passengers were furtive and shy.

The bride was not pretty, nor was she very young. She wore a dress of blue cashmere, with small reservations of velvet here and there, and with steel buttons abounding. She continually twisted her head to regard her puff sleeves, very stiff, straight, and high. They embarrassed her. It was quite apparent that she had cooked, and that she expected to cook, dutifully. The blushes caused by the careless scrutiny of some passengers as she had entered the car were strange to see upon this plain, under-class countenance, which was drawn in placid, almost emotionless lines.

They were evidently very happy. "Ever been in a parlour-car before?" he asked, smiling with delight.

"No," she answered; "I never was. It's fine, ain't it?"

"Great! And then after a while we'll go forward to the diner, and get a big lay-out. Finest meal in the world. Charge a dollar."

"Oh, do they?" cried the bride. "Charge a dollar? Why, that's too much—for us—ain't it, Jack?"

"Not this trip, anyhow," he answered bravely. "We're going to go the whole thing."

Later he explained to her about the trains. "You see, it's a thousand miles from one end of Texas to the other; and this train runs right across it, and never stops but four times." He had the pride of an owner. He pointed out to her the dazzling fittings of the coach; and in truth her eyes opened wider as she contemplated the sea-green figured velvet, the shining brass, silver, and glass, the wood that gleamed as darkly brilliant as the surface of a pool of oil. At one end a bronze figure sturdily held a support for a separated chamber, and at convenient places on the ceiling were frescoes in olive and silver.

To the minds of the pair, their surroundings reflected the glory of their mar-

riage that morning in San Antonio; this was the environment of their new estate; and the man's face in particular beamed with an elation that made him appear ridiculous to the Negro porter. This individual at times surveyed them from afar with an amused and superior grin. On other occasions he bullied them with skill in ways that did not make it exactly plain to them that they were being bullied. He subtly used all the manners of the most unconquerable kind of snobbery. He oppressed them; but of this oppression they had small knowledge, and they speedily forgot that infrequently a number of travellers covered them with stares of derisive enjoyment. Historically there was supposed to be something infinitely humorous in their situation.

"We are due in Yellow Sky at 3:42," he said, looking tenderly into her eyes.

"Oh, are we? she said, as if she had not been aware of it. To evince surprise at her husband's statement was part of her wifely amiability. She took from a pocket a little silver watch; and as she held it before her, and stared at it with a frown of attention, the new husband's face shone.

"I bought it in San Anton' from a friend of mine," he told her gleefully.

"It's 12:17," she said, looking up at him with a kind of shy and clumsy coquetry. A passenger, noting this play, grew excessively sardonic, and winked at himself in one of the numerous mirrors.

At last they went to the dining-car. Two rows of Negro waiters, in glowing white suits, surveyed their entrance with the interest, and also the equanimity, of men who had been forewarned. The pair fell to the lot of a waiter who happened to feel pleasure in steering them through their meal. He viewed them with the manner of a fatherly pilot, his countenance radiant with benevolence. The patronage, entwined with the ordinary deference, was not plain to them. And yet, as they returned to their coach, they showed in their faces a sense of escape.

To the left, miles down a long purple slope, was a little ribbon of mist where moved the keening Rio Grande. The train was approaching it at an angle, and the apex was Yellow Sky. Presently it was apparent that, as the distance from Yellow Sky grew shorter, the husband became commensurately restless. His brick-red hands were more insistent in their prominence. Occasionally he was even rather absent-minded and far-away when the bride leaned forward and addressed him.

As a matter of truth, Jack Potter was beginning to find the shadow of a deed weigh upon him like a leaden slab. He, the town marshal of Yellow Sky, a man known, liked, and feared in his corner, a prominent person, had gone to San Antonio to meet a girl he believed he loved, and there, after the usual prayers, had actually induced her to marry him, without consulting Yellow Sky for any part of the transaction. He was now bringing his bride before an innocent and unsuspecting community.

Of course people in Yellow Sky married as it pleased them, in accordance with a general custom; but such was Potter's thought of his duty to his friends, or of their idea of his duty, or of an unspoken form which does not control men in their matters, that he felt he was heinous. He had committed an extraordinary crime. Face to face with this girl in San Antonio, and spurred by his sharp impulse, he had gone headlong over all the social hedges. At San Antonio he was like a man hidden in the dark. A knife to sever any friendly duty, any form, was easy to his hand in that remote city. But the hour of Yellow Sky—the hour of daylight—was approaching.

He knew full well that his marriage was an important thing to his town. It could only be exceeded by the burning of the new hotel. His friends could not forgive him. Frequently he had reflected on the advisability of telling them by telegraph, but a new cowardice had been upon him. He feared to do it. And now the train was hurrying him toward a scene of amazement, glee, and reproach. He glanced out of the window at the line of haze swinging slowly in toward the train.

Yellow Sky had a kind of brass band, which played painfully, to the delight of the populace. He laughed without heart as he thought of it. If the citizens could dream of his prospective arrival with his bride, they would parade the band at the station and escort them, amid cheers and laughing congratulations, to his adobe home.

He resolved that he would use all the devices of speed and plainscraft in making the journey from the station to his house. Once within that safe citadel, he could issue some sort of vocal bulletin, and then not go among the citizens until they had time to wear off a little of their enthusiasm.

The bride looked anxiously at him. "What's worrying you, Jack?"

He laughed again. "I'm not worrying, girl; I'm only thinking of Yellow Sky."

She flushed in comprehension.

A sense of mutual guilt invaded their minds and developed a finer tenderness. They looked at each other with eyes softly aglow. But Potter often laughed the same nervous laugh; the flush upon the bride's face seemed quite permanent.

The traitor to the feelings of Yellow Sky narrowly watched the speeding landscape. "We're nearly there," he said.

Presently the porter came and announced the proximity of Potter's home. He held a brush in his hand, and, with all his airy superiority gone, he brushed Potter's new clothes as the latter slowly turned this way and that way. Potter fumbled out a coin and gave it to the porter, as he had seen others do. It was a heavy and muscle-bound business, as that of a man shoeing his first horse.

The porter took their bag, and as the train began to slow they moved forward to the hooded platform of the car. Presently the two engines and their long string of coaches rushed into the station of Yellow Sky.

"They have to take water here," said Potter, from a constricted throat and in mournful cadence, as one announcing death. Before the train stopped his eye had swept the length of the platform, and he was glad and astonished to see there was none upon it but the station-agent, who, with a slightly hurried and anxious air, was walking toward the water-tanks. When the train had halted, the porter alighted first, and placed in position a little temporary step.

"Come on, girl," said Potter, hoarsely. As he helped her down they each laughed on a false note. He took the bag from the Negro, and bade his wife cling to his arm. As they slunk rapidly away, his hang-dog glance perceived that they were unloading the two trunks, and also that the station-agent, far ahead near the baggage car, had turned and was running toward him, making gestures. He laughed, and groaned as he laughed, when he noted the first effect of his marital bliss upon Yellow Sky. He gripped his wife's arm firmly to his side, and they fled. Behind them the porter stood, chuckling fatuously.

II

The California express on the Southern Railway was due at Yellow Sky in twenty-

one minutes. There were six men at the bar of the Weary Gentleman saloon. One was a drummer who talked a great deal and rapidly; there were Texans who did not care to talk at that time; and two were Mexican sheep-herders, who did not talk as a general practice in the Weary Gentleman saloon. The barkeeper's dog lay on the board walk that crossed in front of the door. His head was on his paws, and he glanced drowsily here and there with the constant vigilance of a dog that is kicked on occasion. Across the sandy street were some vivid green grass-plots, so wonderful in appearance, amid the sands that burned near them in a blazing sun, that they caused a doubt in the mind. They exactly resembled the grass mats used to represent lawns on the stage. At the cooler end of the railway station, a man without a coat sat in a tilted chair and smoked his pipe. The fresh-cut bank of the Rio Grande circled near the town, and there could be seen beyond it a great plum-colored plain of mesquite.

Save for the busy drummer and his companions in the saloon, Yellow Sky was dozing. The new-comer leaned gracefully upon the bar, and recited many tales with the confidence of a bard who has come upon a new field.

"—and at the moment that the old man fell downstairs with the bureau in his arms, the old woman was coming up with two scuttles of coal, and of course—"

The drummer's tale was interrupted by a young man who suddenly appeared in the open door. He cried: "Scratchy Wilson's drunk, and has turned loose with both hands." The two Mexicans at once set down their glasses and faded out of the rear entrance of the saloon.

The drummer, innocent and jocular, answered: "All right, old man. S'pose he has? Come in and have a drink, anyhow."

But the information had made such an obvious cleft in every skull in the room that the drummer was obliged to see its importance. All had become instantly solemn. "Say," said he, mystified, "what is this?" His three companions made the introductory gesture of eloquent speech; but the young man at the door forestalled them.

"It means, my friend," he answered, as he came into the saloon, "that for the next two hours this town won't be a health resort."

The barkeeper went to the door, and locked and barred it; reaching out of the window, he pulled in heavy wooden shutters, and barred them. Immediately a solemn, chapel-like gloom was upon the place. The drummer was looking from one to another.

"But say," he cried, "what is this, anyhow? You don't mean there is going to be a gun-fight?"

"Don't know whether there'll be a fight or not," answered one man, grimly; "but there'll be some shootin'—some good shootin'."

The young man who had warned them waved his hand. "Oh, there'll be a fight fast enough, if any one wants it. Anybody can get a fight out there in the street. There's a fight just waiting."

The drummer seemed to be swayed between the interest of a foreigner and a perception of personal danger.

"What did you say his name was?" he asked.

"Scratchy Wilson," they answered in chorus.

"And will he kill anybody? What are you going to do? Does this happen often? Does he rampage around like this once a week or so? Can he break in that door?"

"No; he can't break down that door," replied the barkeeper. "He's tried it three times. But when he comes you'd better lay

down on the floor, stranger. He's dead sure to shoot at it, and a bullet may come through."

Thereafter the drummer kept a strict eye upon the door. The time had not yet been called for him to hug the floor, but, as a minor precaution, he sidled near to the wall. "Will he kill anybody?" he said again.

The men laughed low and scornfully at the question.

"He's out to shoot, and he's out for trouble. Don't see any good in experimentin' with him."

"But what do you do in a case like this? What do you do?"

A man responded: "Why, he and Jack Potter—"

"But," in chorus the other men interrupted, "Jack Potter's in San Anton'."

"Well, who is he? What's he got to do with it?"

"Oh, he's the town marshal. He goes out and fights Scratchy when he gets on one of these tears."

"Wow!" said the drummer, mopping his brow. "Nice job he's got."

The voices had toned away to mere whisperings. The drummer wished to ask further questions, which were born of an increasing anxiety and bewilderment; but when he attempted them, the men merely looked at him in irritation and motioned him to remain silent. A tense waiting hush was upon them. In the deep shadows of the room their eyes shone as they listened for sounds from the street. One man made three gestures at the barkeeper; and the latter, moving like a ghost, handed him a glass and a bottle. The man poured a full glass of whisky, and set down the bottle noiselessly. He gulped the whisky in a swallow, and turned again toward the door in immovable silence. The drummer saw that the barkeeper, without a sound, had taken a Winchester from beneath the bar. Later he saw this individual beckoning to him, so he tiptoed across the room.

"You better come with me back of the bar."

"No, thanks," said the drummer, perspiring; "I'd rather be where I can make a break for the back door."

Whereupon the man of bottles made a kindly but peremptory gesture. The drummer obeyed it, and, finding himself seated on a box with his head below the level of the bar, balm was laid upon his soul at sight of various zinc and copper fittings that bore a resemblance to armour-plate. The barkeeper took a seat comfortably upon an adjacent box.

"You see," he whispered, "this here Scratchy Wilson is a wonder with a gun—a perfect wonder; and when he goes on the war-trail, we hunt our holes—naturally. He's about the last one of the old gang that used to hang out along the river here. He's a terror when he's drunk. When he's sober he's all right—kind of simple—wouldn't hurt a fly—nicest fellow in town. But when he's drunk—whoo!"

There were periods of stillness. "I wish Jack Potter was back from San Anton'," said the barkeeper. "He shot Wilson up once—in the leg—and he would sail in and pull out the kinks in this thing."

Presently they heard from a distance the sound of a shot, followed by three wild yowls. It instantly removed a bond from the men in the darkened saloon. There was a shuffling of feet. They looked at each other. "Here he comes," they said.

III

A man in a maroon-coloured flannel shirt, which had been purchased for purposes of decoration, and made principally by some Jewish women on the East Side of New York, rounded a corner and walked

into the middle of the main street of Yellow Sky. In either hand the man held a long, heavy, blue-black revolver. Often he yelled, and these cries rang through a semblance of a deserted village, shrilly flying over the roofs in a volume that seemed to have no relation to the ordinary vocal strength of a man. It was as if the surrounding stillness formed the arch of a tomb over him. These cries of ferocious challenge rang against walls of silence. And his boots had red tops with gilded imprints, of the kind beloved in winter by little sledding boys on the hillsides of New England.

The man's face flamed in a rage begot of whisky. His eyes, rolling, and yet keen for ambush, hunted the still doorways and windows. He walked with the creeping movement of the midnight cat. As it occurred to him, he roared menacing information. The long revolvers in his hands were as easy as straws; they were moved with an electric swiftness. The little fingers of each hand played sometimes in a musician's way. Plain from the low collar of the shirt, the cords of his neck straightened and sank, straightened and sank, as passion moved him. The only sounds were his terrible invi..tions. The calm adobes preserved their demeanour at the passing of this small thing in the middle of the street.

There was no offer of fight—no offer of fight. The man called to the sky. There were no attractions. He bellowed and fumed and swayed his revolvers here and everywhere.

The dog of the barkeeper of the Weary Gentleman saloon had not appreciated the advance of events. He yet lay dozing in front of his master's door. At sight of the dog, the man paused and raised his revolver humorously. At sight of the man, the dog sprang up and walked diagonally away, with a sullen head, and growling. The man yelled, and the dog broke into a gallop. As it was about to enter an alley, there was a loud noise, a whistling, and something spat the ground directly before it. The dog screamed, and, wheeling in terror, galloped headlong in a new direction. Again there was a noise, a whistling, and sand was kicked viciously before it. Fear-stricken, the dog turned and flurried like an animal in a pen. The man stood laughing, his weapons at his hips.

Ultimately the man was attracted by the closed door of the Weary Gentleman saloon. He went to it and, hammering with a revolver, demanded drink.

The door remaining imperturbable, he picked a bit of paper from the walk, and nailed it to the framework with a knife. He then turned his back contemptuously upon this popular resort and, walking to the opposite side of the street and spinning there on his heel quickly and lithely, fired at the bit of paper. He missed it by a half-inch. He swore at himself, and went away. Later he comfortably fusilladed the windows of his most intimate friend. The man was playing with this town; it was a toy for him.

But still there was no offer of fight. The name of Jack Potter, his ancient antagonist, entered his mind, and he concluded that it would be a glad thing if he should go to Potter's house, and by bombardment induce him to come out and fight. He moved in the direction of his desire, chanting Apache scalp-music.

When he arrived at it, Potter's house presented the same still front as had the other adobes. Taking up a strategic position, the man howled a challenge. But this house regarded him as might a great stone god. It gave no sign. After a decent wait, the man howled further challenges, mingling with them wonderful epithets.

Presently there came the spectacle of a man churning himself into deepest rage over the immobility of a house. He fumed at it as the winter wind attacks a prairie cabin in the North. To the distance there should have gone the sound of a tumult like the fighting of two hundred Mexicans. As necessity bade him, he paused for breath or to reload his revolvers.

IV

Potter and his bride walked sheepishly and with speed. Sometimes they laughed together shamefacedly and low.

"Next corner, dear," he said finally.

They put forth the efforts of a pair walking bowed against a strong wind. Potter was about to raise a finger to point the first appearance of the new home when, as they circled the corner, they came face to face with a man in a maroon-coloured shirt, who was feverishly pushing cartridges into a large revolver. Upon the instant the man dropped his revolver to the ground and, like lightning, whipped another from his holster. The second weapon was aimed at the bridegroom's chest.

There was a silence. Potter's mouth seemed to be merely a grave for his tongue. He exhibited an instinct to at once loosen his arm from the woman's grip, and he dropped the bag to the sand. As for the bride, her face had gone as yellow as old cloth. She was a slave to hideous rites, gazing at the apparitional snake.

The two men faced each other at a distance of three paces. He of the revolver smiled with a new and quiet ferocity.

"Tried to sneak up on me," he said. "Tried to sneak up on me!" His eyes grew more baleful. As Potter made a slight movement, the man thrust his revolver venomously forward. "No; don't you do it, Jack Potter. Don't you move a finger toward a gun just yet. Don't you move an eyelash. The time has come for me to settle with you, and I'm goin' to do it my own way, and load along with no interferin'. So if you don't want a gun bent on you, just mind what I tell you."

Potter looked at his enemy. "I ain't got a gun on me, Scratchy," he said. "Honest, I ain't." He was stiffening and steadying, but yet somewhere at the back of his mind a vision of the Pullman floated: the sea-green figured velvet, the shining brass, silver, and glass, the wood that gleamed as darkly brilliant as the surface of a pool of oil—all the glory of the marriage, the environment of the new estate. "You know I fight when it comes to fighting, Scratchy Wilson; but I ain't got a gun on me. You'll have to do all the shootin' yourself."

His enemy's face went livid. He stepped forward, and lashed his weapon to and fro before Potter's chest. "Don't you tell me you ain't got no gun on you, you whelp. Don't tell me no lie like that. There ain't a man in Texas ever seen you without no gun. Don't take me for no kid." His eyes blazed with light, and his throat worked like a pump.

"I ain't takin' you for no kid," answered Potter. His heels had not moved an inch backward. "I'm takin' you for a damn fool. I tell you I ain't got a gun, and I ain't. If you're goin' to shoot me up, you better begin now; you'll never get a chance like this again."

So much enforced reasoning had told on Wilson's rage; he was calmer. "If you ain't got a gun, why ain't you got a gun?" he sneered. "Been to Sunday-school?"

"I ain't got a gun because I've just come from San Anton' with my wife. I'm married," said Potter. "And if I'd thought there was going to be any galoots like you

prowling around when I brought my wife home. I'd had a gun, and don't you forget it."

"Married!" said Scratchy, not at all comprehending.

"Yes, married. I'm married," said Potter, distinctly.

"Married?" said Scratchy. Seemingly for the first time, he saw the drooping, drowning woman at the other man's side. "No!" he said. He was like a creature allowed a glimpse of another world. He moved a pace backward, and his arm, with the revolver, dropped to his side. "Is this the lady?" he asked.

"Yes; this is the lady," answered Potter.

There was another period of silence.

"Well," said Wilson at last, slowly, "I s'pose it's all off now."

"It's all off if you say so, Scratchy. You know I didn't make the trouble." Potter lifted his valise.

"Well, I 'low it's off, Jack," said Wilson. He was looking at the ground. "Married!" He was not a student of chivalry; it was merely that in the presence of this foreign condition he was a simple child of the earlier plains. He picked up his starboard revolver, and, placing both weapons in their holsters, he went away. His feet made funnel-shaped tracks in the heavy sand.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe how the author establishes the discomfort of the newlyweds.

2. Why had Potter not told his friends about his marriage?

3. Is it significant that the bride is not pretty?

4. How does Potter show his delight in the elegance of the surroundings on the train?

5. What are Potter's feelings about the way Yellow Sky will receive the news of his marriage?

6. Are there examples of humor in the story?

7. What does the reader learn about Yellow Sky?

8. How is the drummer (salesman) and the reader made aware of the danger of Scratchy Wilson in his drunken state?

9. Is the description of Scratchy Wilson convincing?

10. Explain the metaphor "Potter's mouth seemed to be merely a grave for his tongue."

11. How does the bride show her fear of Scratchy Wilson?

12. How does Crane create and maintain suspense in the story?

13. What made Scratchy Wilson decide not to cause trouble and to leave without hurting Potter?

14. Do you think that "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" creates the single effect that Poe states is the mark of a good short story? Give your reasons.

CHAPTER XIX

EDGAR ALLAN POE

EDGAR ALLAN POE (1809-1849)

Poe published over seventy short stories in his short life. His best short stories deal with either logical reasoning, as in his detective stories, or terror, as is the case of "The Cask of Amontillado." Poe's tales of terror are, perhaps, more widely known to the general reader than his detective stories.

Poe's short, narrative prose style as found in the two categories characteristic of his fiction has widely influenced the form and purpose of the short story, not only in the United States, but also around the world.

"The Cask of Amontillado" (together with "The Tell-Tale Heart") best illustrates Poe's terror stories and the clarity with which he develops his own method. (See the section entitled *The American Short Story* for a brief treatment of Poe's definition of the short story.) Every word in this short story contributes toward the single effect of terror which the story conveys.

The Cask of Amontillado

The thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could, but when he ventured upon insult, I vowed revenge. You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that I gave utterance to a threat. *At length* I would be avenged; this was a point definitely settled—but the very definitiveness with which it was resolved precluded the idea of risk. I must not only punish, but punish with impunity. A wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong.

It must be understood that neither by word nor deed had I given Fortunato cause to doubt my good will. I continued, as was my wont, to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my smile *now* was at the thought of his immolation.

He had a weak point—this Fortunato—although in other regards he was a man to be respected and even feared. He prided himself on his connoisseurship in wine. Few Italians have the true virtuoso spirit. For the most part their enthusiasm is adopted to suit the time and opportunity to practise imposture upon the British and Austrian *millionaires*. In painting and gemmary Fortunato, like his countrymen, was a quack, but in the matter of old wines he was sincere. In this respect I did not differ from him materially:—I was skillful in the Italian vintages myself, and bought largely whenever I could.

It was about dusk, one evening during the supreme madness of the carnival season, that I encountered my friend. He accosted me with excessive warmth, for he had been drinking much. The man wore motley. He had on a tight-fitting parti-striped dress, and his head was surmounted by the conical cap and bells. I was so pleased to see him, that I thought I should never have done wringing his hand.

I said to him—"My dear Fortunato, you are luckily met. How remarkably well you are looking to-day! But I have received a pipe of what passes for Amontillado, and I have my doubts."

"How?" said he, "Amontillado? A pipe? Impossible! And in the middle of the carnival?"

"I have my doubts," I replied; "and I was silly enough to pay the full Amontillado price without consulting you in the matter. You were not to be found, and I was fearful of losing a bargain."

"Amontillado!"

"I have my doubts."

"Amontillado!"

"And I must satisfy them."

"Amontillado!"

"As you are engaged, I am on my way to Luchesi. If any one has a critical turn, it is he. He will tell me—"

"Luchesi cannot tell Amontillado from Sherry."

"And yet some fools will have it that his taste is a match for your own."

"Come, let us go."

"Whither?"

"To your vaults."

"My friend, no; I will not impose upon your good nature. I perceive you have an engagement. Luchesi—"

"I have no engagement; come."

"My friend, no. It is not the engagement, but the severe cold with which I perceive you are afflicted. The vaults are insufferably damp. They are encrusted with nitre."

"Let us go, nevertheless. The cold is merely nothing. Amontillado! You have been imposed upon; and as for Luchesi, he cannot distinguish Sherry from Amontillado."

Thus speaking Fortunato possessed himself of my arm. Putting on a mask of black silk, and drawing a *roquelaure* closely about my person, I suffered him to hurry me to my palazzo.

There were no attendants at home; they had absconded to make merry in honour of the time. I had told them that I should not return until the morning, and had given them explicit orders not to stir from the house. These orders were sufficient, I well knew, to insure their immediate disappearance, one and all, as soon as my back was turned.

I took from their sconces two flambeaux, and giving one to Fortunato, bowed him through several suites of rooms to the archway that led into the vaults. I passed down a long and winding staircase, requesting him to be cautious as he followed. We came at length to the foot of the descent, and stood together on the damp ground of the catacombs of the Montresors.

The gait of my friend was unsteady, and the bells upon his cap jingled as he strode.

"The pipe," said he.

"It is farther on," said I; "but observe the white web-work which gleams from these cavern walls."

He turned towards me, and looked into my eyes with two filmy orbs that distilled the rheum of intoxication.

"Nitre?" he asked, at length.

"Nitre," I replied. "How long have you had that cough?"

"Ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!"

My poor friend found it impossible to reply for many minutes.

"It is nothing," he said, at last.

"Come," I said, with decision, "we will go back; your health is precious. You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as once I was. You are a man to be missed. For me it is no matter. We will go back; you will be ill, and I cannot be responsible. Besides, there is Luchesi—"

"Enough," he said; "the cough is a mere nothing; it will not kill me. I shall not die of a cough."

"True—true," I replied; "and, indeed, I had no intention of alarming you unnecessarily—but you should use all proper caution. A draught of this Medoc will defend us from the damps."

Here I knocked off the neck of a bottle which I drew from a long row of its fellows that lay upon the mould.

"Drink," I said, presenting him the wine.

He raised it to his lips with a leer. He

paused and nodded to me familiarly, while his bells jingled.

"I drink," he said, "to the buried that repose around us."

"And I to your long life."

He again took my arm, and we proceeded.

"These vaults," he said, "are extensive".

"The Montresors," I replied, "were a great and numerous family."

"I forget your arms."

"A huge human foot d'or, in a field azure; the foot crushes a serpent rampant whose fangs are imbedded in the heel."

"And the motto?"

"*Nemo me impune lacessit.*"[1]

"Good!" he said.

The wine sparkled in his eyes and the bells jingled. My own fancy grew warm with the Medoc. We had passed through walls of piled bones, with casks and puncheons intermingling, into the inmost recesses of the catacombs. I paused again, and this time I made bold to seize Fortunato by an arm above the elbow.

"The nitre!" I said; "see, it increases. It hangs like moss upon the vaults. We are below the river's bed. The drops of moisture trickle among the bones. Come, we will go back ere it is too late. Your cough—"

"It is nothing," he said; "let us go on. But first, another draught of the Medoc." I broke and reached him a flagon of De Grâve. He emptied it at a breath. His eyes flashed with a fierce light. He laughed and threw the bottle upwards with a gesticulation I did not understand.

I looked at him in surprise. He repeated the movement—a grotesque one. "You do not comprehend?" he said.

"Not I," I replied.

"Then you are not of the brotherhood."

"How?"

"You are not of the masons."

"Yes, yes," I said, "yes, yes."

"You? Impossible! A mason?"

"A mason," I replied.

"A sign," he said.

"It is this," I answered, producing a trowel from beneath the folds of my *roquelaure*.

"You jest," he explained, recoiling a few paces. "But let us proceed to the Amontillado."

"Be it so," I said, replacing the tool beneath the cloak, and again offering him my arm. He leaned upon it heavily. We continued our route in search of the Amontillado. We passed through a range of low arches, descended, passed on, and descending again, arrived at a deep crypt, in which the foulness of the air caused our flambeaux rather to glow than flame.

At the most remote end of the crypt there appeared another less spacious. Its walls had been lined with human remains piled to the vault overhead, in the fashion of the great catacombs of Paris. Three sides of this interior crypt were still ornamented in this manner. From the fourth the bones had been thrown down, and lay promiscuously upon the earth, forming at one point a mound of some size. Within the wall thus exposed by the displacing of the bones, we perceived a still interior recess, in depth about four feet, in width three, in height six or seven. It seemed to have been constructed for no especial use within itself, but formed merely the interval between two of the colossal supports of the roof of the catacombs, and was backed by one of their circumscribing walls of solid granite.

It was in vain that Fortunato, uplifting his dull torch, endeavoured to pry into the depths of the recess. Its termination the feeble light did not enable us to see.

"Proceed," I said; "herein is the Amontillado. As for Luchesi—"

1. No one attacks me without punishment.

"He is an ignoramus," interrupted my friend, as he stepped unsteadily forward, while I followed immediately at his heels. In an instant he had reached the extremity of the niche, and finding his progress arrested by the rock, stood stupidly bewildered. A moment more and I had fettered him to the granite. In its surface were two iron staples, distant from each other about two feet, horizontally. From one of these depended a short chain, from the other a padlock. Throwing the links about his waist, it was but the work of a few seconds to secure it. He was too much astounded to resist. Withdrawing the key I stepped back from the recess.

"Pass your hand," I said, "over the wall; you cannot help feeling the nitre. Indeed it is very damp. Once more let me *implore* you to return. No? Then I must positively leave you. But I must first render you all the little attentions in my power."

"The Amontillado!" ejaculated my friend, not yet recovered from his astonishment.

"True," I replied; "the Amontillado."

As I said these words I busied myself among the pile of bones of which I have before spoken. Throwing them aside, I soon uncovered a quantity of building-stone and mortar. With these materials and with the aid of my trowel, I began vigorously to wall up the entrance of the niche.

I had scarcely laid the first tier of the masonery when I discovered that the intoxication of Fortunato had in a great measure worn off. The earliest indication I had of this was a low moaning cry from the depth of the recess. It was *not* the cry of a drunken man. There was then a long and obstinate silence. I laid the second tier, and the third, and the fourth; and then I heard furious vibrations of the chain. The noise lasted for several minutes, during which, that I might hearken to it with the more satisfaction, I ceased my labours and sat down upon the bones. When at last the clanking subsided, I resumed the trowel, and finished without interruption the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh tier. The wall was now nearly upon a level with my breast. I again paused, and holding the flambeaux over the masonwork, threw a few feeble rays upon the figure within.

A succession of loud and shrill screams, bursting suddenly from the throat of the chained form, seemed to thrust me violently back. For a brief moment I hesitated—I trembled. Unsheathing my rapier, I began to grope with it about the recess; but the thought of an instant reassured me. I placed my hand upon the solid fabric of the catacombs, and felt satisfied. I reapproached the wall. I replied to the yells of him who clamoured. I re-echoed—I aided—I surpassed them in volume and in strength. I did this, and the clamourer grew still.

It was now midnight, and my task was drawing to a close. I had completed the eighth, the ninth, and the tenth tier. I had finished a portion of the last and the eleventh; there remained but a single stone to be fitted and plastered in. I struggled with its weight; I placed it partially in its destined position. But now there came from out the niche a low laugh that erected the hairs upon my head. It was succeeded by a sad voice, which I had difficulty in recognizing as that of the noble Fortunato. The voice said—

"Ha! ha! ha!—he! he! he!—a very good joke indeed—an excellent jest. We will have many a rich laugh about it at the palazzo—he! he! he!—over our wine—he! he! he!"

"The Amontillado!" I said.

"He! he! he!—he! he! he!—yes, the Amontillado. But is it not getting late? Will not they be awaiting us at the palazzo, the

Lady Fortunato and the rest? Let us be gone."

"Yes," I said, "let us be gone."

"*For the love of God, Montresor!*"

"Yes," I said, "for the love of God!"

But to these words I hearkened in vain for a reply. I grew impatient. I called aloud; "Fortunato!"

No answer. I called again; "Fortunato!"

No answer still. I thrust a torch through the remaining aperture and let it fall within. There came forth in return only a jingling of the bells. My heart grew sick—on account of the dampness of the catacombs. I hastened to make an end of my labor. I forced the last stone into its position; I plastered it up. Against the new masonry I re-erected the old rampart of bones. For half a century no mortal has disturbed them. *In pace requiescat!*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. "The Cask of Amontillado" is told in the first person. How does this help to heighten the effect of horror that Poe wishes to produce?

2. Montresor states the theme of the story in the first paragraph. Restate the theme in your own words. Is Montresor successful in following this theme?

3. Do you find any clues that might suggest that the narrator is insane?

4. How does Montresor explain the sensation he experiences when he hears the bells jingle on the fool's cap?

5. Does Montresor seem to be sorry for the revenge he has taken?

6. Do you think Montresor's motive is justified? Explain. Does Poe give the reader clues which point to the ending of the story?

7. In your opinion is the story based on the process of logical reasoning or on emotion aroused by the supernatural? Give your reasons.

8. What details contribute to the single effect of the story?

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Read another of Poe's short stories such as *The Masque of the Red Death*, *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, *The Gold-Bug*, *The Black Cat*, *The Mystery of Marie Roget* or *The Tell-Tale Heart*, or *The Pit and the Pendulum*. Prepare a written composition in which you analyze the story with regard to its fulfilling Poe's standards for short prose narrative. (See the introductory essay on *The American Short Story* at the beginning of this section.) Or, you may prefer to compare the story with *The Cask of Amontillado* and the manner in which each story attains the "unique single effect" that Poe feels is essential.

CHAPTER XX

FRANK R. STOCKTON

FRANK R. STOCKTON (1834-1902)

Frank R. Stockton was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and early in his career became a wood engraver. Later in his career he turned to the writing of humorous stories, often combining his stories with his engravings. In 1873 Stockton became the assistant editor of *St. Nicholas* magazine, a popular publication of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He served on the staff of *St. Nicholas* until 1881.

Stockton first attained writing success in 1879 with the publication of his novel *Rudder Grange*. Although he published a number of noteworthy novels, among them *The Rudder Grangers Abroad* (1884), *The Casting Away of Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine* (1886), *The Squirrel Inn* (1891), *The Adventures of Captain* (1895), and *Mrs. Cliff's Yacht* (1896), he is probably best known for his short story, *The Lady or the Tiger* (1882).

The Lady, or the Tiger?

In the very olden time, there lived a semi-barbaric king, whose ideas, though somewhat polished and sharpened by the progressiveness of distant Latin neighbors, were still large, florid, and unrammelled, as became the half of him which was barbaric. He was a man of exuberant fancy, and, withal, of an authority so irresistible that, at his will, he turned his varied fancies into facts. He was greatly given to self-communing; and, when he and himself agreed upon anything, the thing was done. When every member of his domestic and political systems moved smoothly in its appointed course, his nature was bland and genial; but whenever there was a little hitch, and some of his orbs got out of their orbits, he was blander and more genial still, for nothing pleased him so much as to make the crooked straight, and crush down uneven places.

Among the borrowed notions by which his barbarism had become semified was that of the public arena, in which, by exhibitions of manly and beastly valor, the minds of his subjects were refined and cultured.

But even here the exuberant and barbaric fancy asserted itself. The arena of the king was built, not to give the people an opportunity of hearing the rhapsodies of dying gladiators, nor to enable them to view the inevitable conclusion of a conflict between religious opinions and hungry jaws, but for purposes far better adapted to widen and develop the mental energies of the people. This vast amphitheater, with its encircling galleries, its mysterious vaults, and its unseen passages, was an agent of poetic justice, in which crime was punished, or virtue rewarded, by the decrees of an impartial and incorruptible chance.

When a subject was accused of a crime of sufficient importance to interest the king, public notice was given that on an appointed day the fate of the accused person would be decided in the king's arena,—a structure which well deserved its name; for, although its form and plan were borrowed from afar, its purpose emanated solely from the brain of this man, who, every barleycorn a king, knew no tradition to which he owed more allegiance than pleased his fancy, and who ingrafted on every adopted form of human thought and action the rich growth of his barbaric idealism.

When all the people had assembled in the galleries, and the king, surrounded by his court, sat high up on his throne of royal state on one side of the arena, he gave a signal, a door beneath him opened, and the

accused subjects stepped out into the amphitheater. Directly opposite him, on the other side of the enclosed space, were two doors, exactly alike and side by side. It was the duty and the privilege of the person on trial, to walk directly to these doors and open one of them. He could open either door he pleased: he was subject to no guidance or influence but that of the aforementioned impartial and incorruptible chance. If he opened the one, there came out of it a hungry tiger, the fiercest and most cruel that could be procured, which immediately sprang upon him, and tore him to pieces, as a punishment for his guilt. The moment that the case of the criminal was thus decided, doleful iron bells were clanged, great wails went up from the hired mourners posted on the outer rim of the arena, and the vast audience, with bowed heads and downcast hearts, wended slowly their homeward way, mourning greatly that one so young and fair, or so old and respected, should have merited so dire a fate.

But, if the accused person opened the other door, there came forth from it a lady, the most suitable to his years and station that his majesty could select among his fair subjects; and to this lady he was immediately married, as a reward of his innocence. It mattered not that he might already possess a wife and family, or that his affections might be engaged upon an object of his own selection: the king allowed no such subordinate arrangements to interfere with his great scheme of retribution and reward. The exercises, as in the other instance, took place immediately, and in the arena. Another door opened beneath the king, and a priest, followed by a band of choristers, and dancing maidens blowing joyous airs on golden horns and treading an epithalamic measure, advanced to where the pair stood, side by side; and the wedding was promptly and cheerily solemnized. Then the gay brass bells rang forth their merry peals, the people shouted glad hurrahs, and the innocent man, preceded by children strewing flowers on his path, led his bride to his home.

This was the king's semi-barbaric method of administering justice. Its perfect fairness is obvious. The criminal could not know out of which door would come the lady: he opened either he pleased, without having the slightest idea whether, in the next instant, he was to be devoured or married. On some occasions the tiger came out of one door, and on some out of the other. The decisions of this tribunal were not only fair, they were positively determinate: the accused person was instantly punished if he found himself guilty; and, if innocent, he was rewarded on the spot, whether he liked it or not. There was no escape from the judgment of the king's arena.

The institution was a very popular one. When the people gathered together on one of the great trial days, they never knew whether they were to witness a bloody slaughter or a hilarious wedding. This element of uncertainty lent an interest to the occasion which it could not otherwise have attained. Thus, the masses were entertained and pleased, and the thinking part of the community could bring no charge of unfairness against this plan; for did not the accused person have the whole matter in his own hands?

This semi-barbaric king had a daughter as blooming as his most florid fancies, and with a soul as fervent and imperious as his own. As is usual in such cases, she was the apple of his eye, and was loved by him above all humanity. Among his courtiers was a young man of that fineness of blood and lowness of station common to the conventional heroes of romance who love royal maidens. This royal maiden was well satis-

fied with her lover, for he was handsome and brave to a degree unsurpassed in all this kingdom; and she loved him with an ardor that had enough of barbarism in it to make it exceeding warm and strong. This love affair moved on happily for many months, until one day the king happened to discover its existence. He did not hesitate nor waver in regard to his duty in the premises. The youth was immediately cast into prison, and a day was appointed for his trial in the king's arena. This, of course, was an especially important occasion; and his majesty, as well as all the people, was greatly interested in the workings and development of this trial. Never before had such a case occurred; never before had a subject dared to love the daughter of a king. In after-years such things became commonplace enough; but then they were, in no slight degree, novel and startling.

The tiger-cages of the kingdom were searched for the most savage and relentless beasts, from which the fiercest monster might be selected for the arena; and the ranks of maiden youth and beauty throughout the land were carefully surveyed by competent judges, in order that the young man might have a fitting bride in case fate did not determine for him a different dēstiny. Of course, everybody knew that the deed with which the accused was charged had been done. He had loved the princess, and neither he, she, nor any one else thought of denying the fact; but the king would not think of allowing any fact of this kind to interfere with the workings of the tribunal, in which he took such great delight and satisfaction. No matter how the affair turned out, the youth would be disposed of; and the king would take an æsthetic pleasure in watching the course of events, which would determine whether or not the young man had done wrong in allowing himself to love the princess.

The appointed day arrived. From far and near the people gathered and thronged the great galleries of the arena; and crowds unable to gain admittance, massed themselves against its outside walls. The king and his court were in their places, opposite the twin doors,—those fateful portals, so terrible in their similarity.

All was ready. The signal was given. A door beneath the royal party opened, and the lover of the princess walked into the arena. Tall, beautiful, fair, his appearance was greeted with a low hum of admiration and anxiety. Half the audience had not known so grand a youth had lived among them. No wonder the princess loved him! What a terrible thing for him to be there!

As the youth advanced into the arena, he turned, as the custom was, to bow to the king; but he did not think at all of that royal personage; his eyes were fixed upon the princess, who sat to the right of her father. Had it not been for the moiety of barbarism in her nature, it is probable that lady would not have been there; but her intense and fervid soul would not allow her to be absent on an occasion in which she was so terribly interested. From the moment that the decree had gone forth, that her lover should decide his fate in the king's arena, she had thought of nothing, night or day, but this great event and the various subjects connected with it. Possessed of more power, influence, and force of character than any one who had ever before been interested in such a case, she had done what no other person had done,—she had possessed herself of the secret of the doors. She knew in which of the two rooms, that lay behind those doors, stood the cage of the tiger, with its open front, and in which waited the lady. Through these thick doors, heavily curtained with skins on the inside, it was impossible that any noise or suggestion should come from within to the person who

should approach to raise the latch of one of them; but gold, and the power of a woman's will, had brought the secret to the princess.

And not only did she know in which room stood the lady ready to emerge, all blushing and radiant, should her door be opened, but she knew who the lady was. It was one of the fairest and loveliest of the damsels of the court who had been selected as the reward of the accused youth, should he be proved innocent of the crime of aspiring to one so far above him; and the princess hated her. Often had she seen, or imagined that she had seen, this fair creature throwing glances of admiration upon the person of her lover, and sometimes she thought these glances were perceived and even returned. Now and then she had seen them talking together; it was but for a moment or two, but much can be said in a brief space; it may have been on most unimportant topics, but how could she know that? The girl was lovely, but she had dared to raise her eyes to the loved one of the princess; and, with all the intensity of the savage blood transmitted to her through long lines of wholly barbaric ancestors, she hated the woman who blushed and trembled behind that silent door.

When her lover turned and looked at her, and his eye met hers as she sat there paler and whiter than any one in the vast ocean of anxious faces about her, he saw, by that power of quick perception which is given to those whose souls are one, that she knew behind which door crouched the tiger, and behind which stood the lady. He had expected her to know it. He understood her nature, and his soul was assured that she would never rest until she had made plain to herself this thing, hidden to all other lookers-on, even to the king. The only hope for the youth in which there was any element of certainty was based upon the success of the princess in discovering this mystery; and the moment he looked upon her, he saw she had succeeded, as in his soul he knew she would succeed.

Then it was that his quick and anxious glance asked the question: "Which?" It was as plain to her as if he shouted it from where he stood. There was not an instant to be lost. The question was asked in a flash; it must be answered in another.

Her right arm lay on the cushioned parapet before her. She raised her hand, and made a slight, quick movement toward the right. No one but her lover saw her. Every eye but his was fixed on the man in the arena.

He turned, and with a firm and rapid step he walked across the empty space. Every heart stopped beating, every breath was held, every eye was fixed immovably upon that man. Without the slightest hesitation, he went to the door on the right, and opened it.

Now, the point of the story is this: Did the tiger come out of that door, or did the lady?

The more we reflect upon this question, the harder it is to answer. It involves a study of the human heart which leads us through devious mazes of passion, out of which it is difficult to find our way. Think of it, fair reader, not as if the decision of the question depended upon yourself, but upon that hot-blooded, semi-barbaric princess, her soul at a white heat beneath the combined fires of despair and jealousy. She had lost him, but who should have him?

How often, in her waking hours and in her dreams, had she started in wild horror, and covered her face with her hands as she thought of her lover opening the door on the other side of which waited the cruel fangs of the tiger!

But how much oftener had she seen him at the other door! How in her grievous reveries had she gnashed her teeth, and torn her hair, when she saw his start of raptur-

ous delight as he opened the door of the lady! How her soul had burned in agony when she had seen him rush to meet that woman, with her flushing cheek and sparkling eye of triumph; when she had seen him lead her forth, his whole frame kindled with the joy of recovered life; when she had heard the glad shouts from the multitude, and the wild ringing of the happy bells; when she had seen the priest, with his joyous followers, advance to the couple, and make them man and wife before her very eyes; and when she had seen them walk away together upon their path of flowers, followed by the tremendous shouts of the hilarious multitude, in which her one despairing shriek was lost and drowned!

Would it not be better for him to die at once, and go to wait for her in the blessed regions of semi-barbaric futurity?

And yet, that awful tiger, those shrieks, that blood!

Her decision had been indicated in an instant, but it had been made after days and nights of anguished deliberation. She had known she would be asked, she had decided what she would answer, and, without the slightest hesitation, she had moved her hand to the right.

The question of her decision is one not to be lightly considered, and it is not for me to presume to set myself up as the one person able to answer it. And so I leave it with all of you: Which came out of the opened door,—the lady, or the tiger?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Many readers think this story is incomplete. What is your opinion?

2. Write your own conclusion to the story.

3. Describe the way in which the storyteller writes—his choice of words, how he uses them, his sentence structure—and your reaction to his way of writing.

4. In paragraph 2 appears the word "semified," yet you won't find it in any dictionary. From the context, determine a possible meaning for this word.

5. Of the four main elements of the short story—character, plot, setting, and theme—which do you think is most important here? Why?

Throughout the world many people think of Americans as being outgoing, materialistic and optimistic: outgoing, because they join clubs, take part in movements, talk with their neighbors across the hall or over the back fence; materialistic, because they are eager for new automobiles and bigger television sets; optimistic, because they believe that they have the power to do good things in a good world, because they seem to say "yes" to life instead of "no."

There is some truth in this general impression, though less with the passing of each year. But American literature at its best has rarely been the product of such Americans. Even in the 18th century, with its prevalent belief in the perfectibility of man through the perfecting of his institutions, there were skeptics, and the 19th century contained its great and pessimistic sayers of "No!" in thunder" (as Melville described himself), as well as the great affirmers, like Emerson and Whitman. By the end of the 19th century the complacent, optimistic tone of the popular poets and novelists had been challenged by Mark Twain, Crane and James, to name only the best known, and the enduring writing of the first quarter of the 20th century is, more often than not, critical of the quality of American society. Its tone is satirical; the stereotyped American is made a figure of fun or an object of pathos; the American dream is shown to be illusory. The occasional yea-sayer like Sandburg stands out almost as an anachronism.

Of the writers in this section, Theodore Dreiser was perhaps the first important new American voice of the 20th century. His naturalism and his choice of subject often echo his predecessor, Stephen Crane, but his style and methods are very different. There is none of the poetic symbolism, none of the probing of psychological depths and neuroses. Perhaps because of his childhood of bitter poverty in an immigrant family which suffered all the deprivations brought about by lack of education, skill and status, Dreiser was more concerned with society's effect on a person than with man apart from his environment. Though the surface details which abound in his works are, of course, out of date—people's clothes, their speech, their jobs—his treatment of the social forces which produce the murderers and prostitutes, as well as the business successes, is as modern as ghetto literature. Dreiser was one of the first important writers to come from the lower levels of society, rather than from a long middle-class tradition, and in this he was the precursor of much that is good in contemporary American writing.

In his novels, Dreiser tried to treat human beings scientifically, rather than intuitively with the poetic insight so much prized by writers of the 19th century. He saw that life is hard and found, in social Darwinism and in the theory of Zola and the naturalists, the explanation that man is the product of social processes and forces and of an inevitable kind of social evolution. However inadequate such an answer to life may be, his books struck a chord of response in many puzzled Americans who recognized that a gulf existed between the dream that America promised on the one hand, and the reality of graft, hypocrisy and callousness that was apparent on the other. Dreiser's tone is always serious, never satirical or comic. It is fitting, then, that his best works are based on his own experiences or those of his immediate family, like *Sister Carrie*, or are fictional re-creations of actual happenings, like his well-known novel, *An American Tragedy*. In retrospect, Dreiser's work is significant, in spite of some obvious faults, for its stubborn honesty and realism—traits which were to appear again in the American writers who succeeded him on the literary scene.

In their opposing ways, the two most important poets of the first decades of the 20th century, Edward Arlington Robinson and Carl Sandburg, also sought to explore the quality of American life and to report on it with Dreiser's kind of truthfulness. Now, as from the beginning, American poets tended to divide sharply into two groups: traditionalists and innovators. Robinson and Sandburg in the 20th century represent these two poles as

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strikingly as did Poe and Whitman in the 19th century. Though less read now than Robert Frost, who first published during this period but whose major influence belongs to a later time, Robinson has the same New England background and equals some of Frost's best qualities as a poet and reporter on the world. Robinson's tone is, however, characteristically ironic and somewhat aloof and detached, even when he evinces an undercurrent of compassion. In his best-known poems, such as "Richard Cory" and "Miniver Cheevy," Robinson uses conventional meter and rhyme to paint wry, condensed, often startling vignettes, which illustrate men's individualized responses to a life that he, like Dreiser, saw as hard. Elsewhere, as in "Mr. Flood's Party," Robinson comes closer to the dramatic narrative form that Frost perfected; for example, in "The Death of the Hired Man." Robinson also made use of traditional themes, such as the Arthurian legends, but all of his poems are conventional and traditional, whether in the tradition of Wordsworth's "The Leech Gatherer" or of Tennyson's "Idylls of the King." What is typical of the 20th century in Robinson is the tone of pessimism, the undercurrent of disillusionment with his heritage and his present.

At the opposite pole of poetic vision and technique is Carl Sandburg, a breaker of conventions akin to Whitman. His background was, in important ways, like Dreiser's; he, too, came of immigrant stock, he, too, grew up in difficult circumstances, though in a much happier and more productive home. Instead of finding in social Darwinism an explanation of what was wrong with society, he saw it in the defects of political institutions, and his own socialism made him hopeful. It also led him to see greatness in the ordinary man and in that man's capacity to create a society in which inequalities would be erased, in which each man's potential would be realized, and in which the chasm between American dream and reality would be bridged. In Sandburg's poems one hears echoes of 19th-century idealism—echoes of Emerson as well as Whitman. One also hears, in 20th-century dress, the 18th century's faith in political and social change as roads to an improved quality of life.

In his poetry Sandburg "chants," to use Whitman's word, a hymn to America and its people—not to the stereotype, but to the ideal. Sandburg's form is the free verse that Whitman employed, with its lines of irregular length, its looser speech rhythms, and the absence of end rhyme. At its best it has the same grand cadences and front rhymes[1] in his shorter poems. Sandburg even tends to use Whitman's movement from short to gradually swelling long lines followed by a return to shorter lines, to produce poems like the lip of a wave. He also uses Whitman's scheme of lists and catalogues, as well as Whitman's praise of the low and seemingly trivial. Thus, in the first quarter of the 20th century, Sandburg, like Whitman before him, stood for innovation and rejection of conventional forms. During this period, he wrote some of his greatest poems, paeans of praise to Chicago which match, in style and fervor, those of Whitman about Manhattan.

More than Robinson's, Sandburg's poetry contains themes common to the period, but as one would expect in a time of disillusionment with its pricking of the bubbles of comfortable complacency, the prose of the period far outweighed the poetry in influence. Muck-raking and debunking more easily fall into prose; they are more prosaic. Interestingly enough, however, the most enduring writing published between 1900 and 1920 was poetry, not only Sandburg's and Robinson's (and Frost's), but poems such as T. S. Eliot's "The Waste-Land" and "Prufrock," and to a lesser degree Ezra Pound's, which influenced a whole age's way of looking at itself. Eliot was proof positive that people and society were in a sad, bad way, and in his tone of satire and exaggeration, as in his expatriation, he anticipated those who created the great literature we associate with the post-World War I era.

The important fact of the second decade of the century was, of course, World War I, which, as we look back, seems to have been a kind of watershed—innocence on one side, attention to grim reality on the other. Actually, as earlier literature clearly demonstrates, the best American writers had crossed from one

1. front rhyme: rhyme at the beginning of successive lines of verse

side to the other decades earlier. Like the stereotype of the optimistic, materialistic hail-fellow-well-met[2] American, the innocent, romantic dreamer was never found in the ranks of our great writers. Nevertheless, the war, which eventually engaged 4,000,000 Americans, changed the outlook of all Americans in very significant ways. It took away some of their provincialism; it intensified the pessimism amd disenchantment with what was peculiarly American; and it led to widespread expatriation. Most of what are considered the masterpieces of American writing in the 20th century were written in Europe, or out of a writer's experience as an expatriate. What the Lost Generation[3] of Gertrude Stein (herself an expatriate) had lost, to a degree true only of Henry James in an earlier time, was its sense of being a part of American society. Sinclair Lewis, John Dos Passos, Ernest Hemingway, e. e. Cummings, William Carlos Williams, and Scott Fitzgerald—like Eliot and Pound—all spent long periods of their lives in Europe. Since none of the best writers was closer to combat than a training camp or the ambulance corps, it was not the war itself, but long exposure to European culture, which intensified the old current of criticism of American life. Of the writers we are considering as typical of the end of the first quarter of the 20th century, only Steinbeck and Mencken did not share this experience of expatriation, a fact Mencken even felt obliged to defend.

The millions of Americans who had fought in "the war to make the world safe for democracy" (as President Wilson called it and as many Americans justified it), together with the millions more whose lives had been much affected by it at home, helped to produce a society in the 20s which was new in many ways. Called the "roaring twenties," it was a time in which women were finally enfranchised and "emancipated," and revolutions in dress, manners, and morals took place. Prohibition came (the "Noble Experiment," which made alcohol illegal), leading to notorious public graft, corruption, and lawbreaking; there was more widespread affluence and conspicuous consumption than ever before in American society, and more emphasis on fun and less on duty became a part of the daily scene. It was a time of exaggeration, experiment and change—a time which invited satirical treatment and was permissive enough to accept it, even to embrace it.

The two most influential satirists of the 20's were Sinclair Lewis, the novelist, and H. L. Mencken, the journalist and essayist. Together they completely altered the ordinary literate American's view of himself. The great interlocking series of Lewis' novels, with their recurring character-types and settings, and their panoramic view of the American Middle Western heartland, ignores the war as if it had never taken place. Lewis uses Europe, where he lived for long periods, as no more than a casual tourist spot in one of his novels. Like Dreiser and Sandburg, Lewis was a Middle Westerner from a small town in Minnesota, which is the setting for his most famous novel and first great success, *Main Street*, but unlike those poor sons of immigrants, "Red" Lewis was thoroughly middle-class. The son of a doctor, he went to Yale University, served as secretary to Upton Sinclair (a writer famous for *The Jungle*, an expose of the meatpacking industry in Chicago, and other socialist-inspired novels), spent years as a journalist in Europe, and was married to a famous foreign correspondent and commentator, Dorothy Thompson. His work soon became successful; the names of some of his characters, such as Babbitt, entered the language as type-names, like those of Dickens. Americans took their view of themselves from the often exaggerated portraits he drew.

Despite their heightening of satirical effect, Lewis' novels were realistic in highly original ways. He had a keen comic sense and a true ear for everyday speech; he was a great mimic and actor, a great story-teller and conversationalist, and these qualities are everywhere evidenced in his novels, especially his earliest (and best). What he had to say in *Main Street* and *Babbitt* and *Dodsworth* about the pretensions of

2. hail-fellow-well-met: on familiar terms with everyone.
3. Lost Generation: collectively, the post-World War I generation; more specifically, the group of American writers who emigrated to Europe in the early 1920s.

small-town society, the thinness of its culture, the pathos and pettiness of the lives lived by its businessmen and their wives. Americans saw, with a shock of recognition, to be true. At the same time, none of this way of life was a tragic matter. In a vein of exuberant comedy Lewis invited his readers to laugh, not at themselves, but at his characters, whose unawareness of their own absurdities he exposed. Novels like these are not necessarily among the greatest in literature, but they may be enormously influential on their times. They render palatable the unpleasant truths which lie just beneath the surface of life. This underlying seriousness was what won Lewis the Nobel Prize, and made him the first American novelist to be so honored.

The influence of H. L. Mencken was, during this early period of the 20th century, even greater than that of Lewis. For twenty years his magazine, *The American Mercury*, was read by everyone with intellectual pretensions. Writers imitated and envied the wit of Mencken's pungent, biting editorials and essays on the latest antics of what he called the "booboisie[4]." Never a literary man in the academic sense, Mencken (like Dreiser, the son of immigrant Germans) spent all his long and productive life in Baltimore as a newspaperman and editor. He was not a part of the literary circles of Chicago or New York, or a member of the expatriate literary colony in Paris. He was a close friend of no major writer except Dreiser, yet he influenced not only the ordinary educated man who read his magazine, newspaper articles and collected essays—quite properly called *Prejudices*—but also the serious writers. Like all satirists, he cared deeply about what he made fun of in his exaggerated, trenchant, often abusive language. He cared about his city, his fellow "boobs," his German beer, and his intellectual life. His completely personal style, his gift for invective, his linguistic inventiveness, all reflect in stimulating ways the deep and scholarly preoccupation with language which is demonstrated in his monumental *The American Language*, a study which is still an intriguing source of data and insights. The vigor and vitality of Mencken's mind are as evident in all he wrote as his bias toward excellence and his hatred of cant and sham.

The last two novelists to be considered here are F. Scott Fitzgerald, who epitomized the "Roaring Twenties," and John Steinbeck, the best of the social-protest novelists of the 30s, the decade of the Great Depression[5]. Neither felt detached from his society, as Lewis and Mencken had, each took "his" decade far too seriously for satire, and felt too much a part of it to take a detached view. Fitzgerald, like Lewis a product of Minnesota, went to Princeton, where he was surrounded by people richer, more sophisticated and superficially cleverer than he was. A feeling of inferiority always plagued him, though at 23 he was already a great popular success and money-maker with his first novel, *This Side of Paradise*. He was the handsome young husband of Zelda, the girl of his dreams, and he was famous and rich when the other expatriate writers in Paris were still, like Hemingway, hungry and unknown.

Even very early, Fitzgerald recognized the sad and frightening side of his merry, dancing, gambling, liberated life, as such a title as *The Beatiful and Damned* shows. His novels grew significantly deeper and more tragic as his money troubles increased, as his wife's madness became more destructive, and as he felt himself heading toward the crack-up which ended his life in Hollywood before he was 45. One of his best novels is *The Great Gatsby*, the story of a man who wants to be rich, well-liked and happy, but who fails for reasons which Fitzgerald's art and compassionate understanding succeed in making his readers accept as tragic. A later Fitzgerald novel is *Tender is the Night*, the story of marital complications among the rich and "fortunate" expatriates in France, which is even sadder and more obviously autobiographical. Fitzgerald, the lucky young writer who symbolized the gay 20s, declined in spirit like his country when the stock market crashed in 1929, when the grim 30s began to move into the Great Depression, and when

4 booboisie: bourgeoisie made up of "boobs"—a term of invective coined by Mencken.

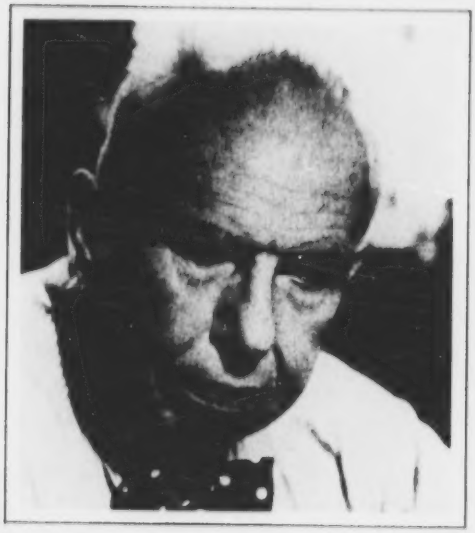
5 Great Depression: years of economic crisis following the stock market crash in 1929. Prices fell, businesses failed, and many people were without work.

Hitler's rise to power signalled the approach of World War II. Fitzgerald's novels are full of pathos: played by bright individuals against bright backdrops, when the scene changed and his world collapsed, his talent flickered and went out.

John Steinbeck, on the other hand, reflected the 30s as perfectly as Fitzgerald had the 20s. Born in Salinas, California, he loved the West, and the countryside. He wrote of the outcast and the bum, the ordinary working man and the biological scientist, all of whose lives he had shared. He loved all these as Fitzgerald had loved the East, Europe, the city, the rich and the parasites who were later to be called "the beautiful people." Steinbeck wrote touching tales of the love of a boy for a pony (*The Red Pony*), of a migratory worker for his half-witted protege (*Of Mice and Men*), of outcasts of all sorts for each other (*Tortilla Flats* and *Cannery Row*). He wrote scientific works like *The Sea of Cortez*, which treats the marine biology of a bay in Lower California; anti-Nazi novels and plays like *The Moon is Down*; and a final book on the United States called *Travels with Charley*. But his most important work is *The Grapes of Wrath*, which helped win him the Nobel Prize with its dramatic re-creating of the terrible westward trek of thousands of Midwestern farmers dispossessed from their Dust Bowl farms by fearful drought and the Great Depression. The endurance and fortitude of the migrants, whose only resources were their will to live and their interdependence, are movingly shown. Ma Joad and her brood are unforgettable. *The Grapes of Wrath* is proof that a thesis-novel, born out of anger and a passion for justice, can transcend propaganda to become literature.

CHAPTER XXI

THEODORE DREISER



THEODORE DREISER (1871-1945)

Of one's ideals, struggles, deprivations, sorrows and joys, it could only be said that they were chemic compulsions, something which for some inexplicable but unimportant reason responded to and resulted from the hope of pleasure and the fear of pain. Man was a mechanism, undevised and uncreated, and a badly and carelessly driven one at that.

—from his *A Book about Myself*

Dreiser (1871-1945) is still considered one of the great American realists, or naturalists. His novels deal with everyday life, often with its sordid side. The characters who people his novels, unable to assert their will against natural and economic forces, are mixtures of good and bad, but he seldom passes judgment on them. He describes them and their actions in massive detail. As Dreiser sees them, human beings are not tragic but pathetic in their inability to escape their petty fates. In the end the sheer weight and power of the author's conviction compel the reader to share his compassionate vision.

Born in small-town Indiana, Dreiser rebelled as a youth against the poverty and narrowness of the life around him. One of his high school teachers recognized his talent and paid his tuition at Indiana University. But Dreiser left college after a year because he felt it "did not concern ordinary life at all." He had various jobs in Chicago: washing dishes, shoveling coal, working in a factory, and collecting bills—experiences which he later used in his writing. He taught himself to be a newspaper reporter and supported himself as a journalist and editor for many years while he was struggling to become recognized as a novelist.

In what was almost a convention of naturalism, Dreiser's first novel was about a prostitute, but unlike Stephen Crane's Maggie, Dreiser's heroine prospers and flourishes. The end furnished a worse shock to Dreiser's readers than his choice of subject: Carrie is not only a rather improbable success on the musical comedy stage but one of her prosperous lovers, whom she has found useful in advancing her career, has suffered a reversal of for-

tune as startling as Carrie's. Readers in 1900 found the "punishment of the lover peculiarly distasteful to their notions of justice; according to the prevailing double standard of sexual morality, the *woman* was supposed to be punished, not the man.

SELECTION 1

Chicago is the scene of *Sister Carrie*, in which Carrie is a pretty young girl whom Dreiser uses to express his own longings for wealth and affection, for the glitter and sexual excitement of the city. The opening chapter, divided into two parts, is largely reprinted here. It shows Carrie leaving home and taking the train to the city. The passage is typical of Dreiser; he gives us his thoughts about Carrie and the salesman she meets and describes them minutely. When Carrie arrives, her sister greets her in a noncommittal fashion. She promises nothing of the excitement and warmth that the salesman holds out to Carrie at the end of the chapter.

From Sister Carrie

Chapter I

When Caroline Meeber boarded the afternoon train for Chicago, her total outfit consisted of a small trunk, a cheap imitation alligator-skin satchel, a small lunch in a paper box, and a yellow leather snap purse, containing her ticket, a scrap of paper with her sister's address on Van Buren Street, and four dollars in money. It was in August, 1889. She was eighteen years of age, bright, timid, and full of the illusions of ignorance and youth. Whatever touch of regret at parting characterised her thoughts, it was certainly not for advantages now being given up. A gush of tears at her mother's farewell kiss, a touch in her throat when the cars clacked by the flour mill where her father worked by the day, a pathetic sigh as the familiar green environs of the village passed in review, and the threads which bound her so lightly to girlhood and home were irretrievably broken.

To be sure there was always the next station, where one might descend and return. There was the great city, bound more closely by these very trains which came up daily. Columbia City was not so very far away, even once she was in Chicago. What, pray, is a few hours—a few hundred miles? She looked at the little slip bearing her sister's address and wondered. She gazed at the green landscape, now passing in swift review, until her swifter thoughts replaced its impression with vague conjectures of what Chicago might be.

When a girl leaves her home at eighteen, she does one of two things. Either she falls into saving hands and becomes better, or she rapidly assumes the cosmopolitan standard of virtue and becomes worse. Of an intermediate balance, under the circumstances, there is no possibility. The city has its cunning wiles, no less than the infinitely smaller and more human tempter. There are large forces which allure with all the soulfulness of expression possible in the most cultured human. The gleam of a thousand lights is often as effective as the persuasive light in a wooing and fascinating eye. Half the undoing of the unsophisticated and natural mind is accomplished by forces wholly superhuman. A blare of sound, a roar of life, a vast array of human hives, appeal to the astonished senses in equivocal terms. Without a counsellor at hand to whisper cautious interpretations, what falsehoods may not these things breathe into the unguarded ear! Unrecognised for what they are, their beauty, like music, too often relaxes, then weakens, then perverts the simpler human perceptions.

Caroline, or Sister Carrie, as she had been half affectionately termed by the family, was possessed of a mind rudimen-

tary in its power of observation and analysis. Self-interest with her was high, but not strong. It was, nevertheless, her guiding characteristic. Warm with the fancies of youth, pretty with the insipid prettiness of the formative period, possessed of a figure promising eventual shapeliness and an eye alight with certain native intelligence, she was a fair example of the middle American class—two generations removed from the emigrant. Books were beyond her interest—knowledge a sealed book. In the intuitive graces she was still crude. She could scarcely toss her head gracefully. Her hands were almost ineffectual. The feet, though small, were set flatly. And yet she was interested in her charms, quick to understand the keener pleasures of life, ambitious to gain in material things. A half-equipped little knight she was, venturing to reconnoitre the mysterious city and dreaming wild dreams of some vague, far-off supremacy, which should make it prey and subject—the proper penitent, grovelling at a woman's slipper.

"That," said a voice in her ear, "is one of the prettiest little resorts in Wisconsin."

"It is?" she answered nervously.

The train was just pulling out of Waukesha. For some time she had been conscious of a man behind. She felt him observing her mass of hair. He had been fidgeting, and with natural intuition she felt a certain interest growing in that quarter. Her maidenly reserve, and a certain sense of what was conventional under the circumstances, called her to forestall and deny this familiarity, but the daring and magnetism of the individual, born of past experiences and triumphs, prevailed. She answered.

He leaned forward to put his elbows upon the back of her seat and proceeded to make himself volubly agreeable.

"Yes, that is a great resort for Chicago people. The hotels are swell. You are not familiar with this part of the country, are you?"

"Oh, yes, I am," answered Carrie. "That is, I live at Columbia City. I have never been through here, though."

"And so this is your first visit to Chicago," he observed.

All the time she was conscious of certain features out of the side of her eye. Flush, colourful cheeks, a light moustache, a grey fedora[1] hat. She now turned and looked upon him in full, the instincts of self-protection and coquetry mingling confusedly in her brain.

"I didn't say that," she said.

"Oh," he answered, in a very pleasing way and with an assumed air of mistake, "I thought you did."

Here was a type of the travelling canvasser[2] for a manufacturing house—a class which at that time was first being dubbed by the slang of the day "drummers." He came within the meaning of a still newer term, which had sprung into general use among Americans in 1880, and which concisely expressed the thought of one whose dress or manners are calculated to elicit the admiration of susceptible young women—a "masher." His suit was of a striped and crossed pattern of brown wool, new at that time, but since become familiar as a business suit. The low crotch of the vest revealed a stiff shirt bosom of white and pink stripes. From his coat sleeves protruded a pair of linen cuffs of the same pattern, fastened with large, gold plate buttons, set with the common yellow agates known as "cat's-eyes." His fingers bore several rings—one, the ever-enduring heavy seal—and from his vest

1. fedora: a soft felt hat with a curled brim.
2. canvasser: salesman.

dangled a neat gold watch chain, from which was suspended the secret insignia of the Order of Elks.[3] The whole suit was rather tight-fitting, and was finished off with heavy-soled tan shoes, highly polished, and the grey fedora hat. He was, for the order of intellect represented, attractive, and whatever he had to recommend him, you may be sure was not lost upon Carrie, in this, her first glance.

3. Order of Elks, a men's social organization devoted to benevolent works in the community.

SELECTION I

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what way is Caroline Meeber representative of thousands of young people who leave a small town for life in the big city? Does this tendency exist in your country?

2. Does Caroline appear to be the type of person you could like or admire? Explain. What emotion do you feel toward her?

3. Describe the "masher." Did your country have his equivalent in the late 19th century or at some other period? If so, describe their similarities or dissimilarities.

4. In one paragraph Dreiser gives us a very clear idea of Carrie. What does this paragraph tell us about her?

SELECTION II

From Sister Carrie

Chapter I (continued)

Lest this order of individual should permanently pass, let me put down some of the most striking characteristics of his most successful manner and method. Good clothes, of course, were the first essential, the things without which he was nothing. A strong physical nature, actuated by a keen desire for the feminine, was the next. A mind free of any consideration of the problems or forces of the world and actuated not by greed, but an insatiable love of variable pleasure. His method was always simple. Its principal element was daring, backed, of course, by an intense desire and admiration for the sex. Let him meet with a young woman once and he would approach her with an air of kindly familiarity, not unmixed with pleading, which would result in most cases in a tolerant acceptance. If she showed any tendency to coquetry he would be apt to straighten her tie, or if she "took up" with him at all, to call her by her first name. If he visited a department store it was to lounge familiarly over the counter and ask some leading questions. In more exclusive circles, on the train or in waiting stations, he went slower. If some seemingly vulnerable object appeared he was all attention—to pass the compliments of the day, to lead the way to the parlor car, carrying her grip, or, failing that, to take a seat next to her with the hope of being able to court her to her destination. Pillows, books, a footstool, the shade lowered; all these figured in the things which he could do. If, when she reached her destination

he did not alight and attend her baggage for her, it was because, in his own estimation, he had signally failed.

A woman should some day write the complete philosophy of clothes. No matter how young, it is one of the things she wholly comprehends. There is an indescribably faint line in the matter of man's apparel which somehow divides for her those who are worth glancing at and those who are not. Once an individual has passed this faint line on the way downward he will get no glance from her. There is another line at which the dress of a man will cause her to study her own. This line the individual at her elbow now marked for Carrie. She became conscious of an inequality. Her own plain blue dress, with its black cotton tape trimmings, now seemed to her shabby. She felt the worn state of her shoes.

"Let's see," he went on, "I know quite a number of people in your town. Morgenroth the clothier and Gibson the dry goods man."

"Oh, do you?" she interrupted, aroused by memories of longings their show windows had cost her.

At last he had a clew to her interest, and followed it deftly. In a few minutes he had come about into her seat. He talked of sales of clothing, his travels, Chicago, and the amusements of that city.

"If you are going there, you will enjoy it immensely. Have you relatives?"

"I am going to visit my sister," she explained.

"You want to see Lincoln Park," he said, "and Michigan Boulevard. They are putting up great buildings there. It's a second New York—great. So much to see—theatres, crowds, fine houses—oh, you'll like that."

There was a little ache in her fancy of all he described. Her insignificance in the presence of so much magnificence faintly affected her. She realised that hers was not to be a round of pleasure, and yet there was something promising in all the material prospect he set forth. There was something satisfactory in the attention of this individual with his good clothes. She could not help smiling as he told her of some popular actress of whom she reminded him. She was not silly, and yet attention of this sort had its weight.

"You will be in Chicago some little time, won't you?" he observed at one turn of the now easy conversation.

"I don't know," said Carrie vaguely—a flash vision of the possibility of her not securing employment rising in her mind.

"Several weeks, anyhow," he said, looking steadily into her eyes.

There was much more passing now than the mere words indicated. He recognised the indescribable thing that made up for fascination and beauty in her. She realised that she was of interest to him from the one standpoint which a woman both delights in and fears. Her manner was simple, though for the very reason that she had not yet learned the many little affectations with which women conceal their true feelings. Some things she did appeared bold. A clever companion—had she ever had one—would have warned her never to look a man in the eyes so steadily.

"Why do you ask?" she said.

"Well, I'm going to be there several weeks. I'm going to study stock at our place and get new samples. I might show you 'round."

"I don't know whether you can or not. I mean I don't know whether I can. I shall be living with my sister, and—"

"Well, if she minds, we'll fix that." He took out his pencil and a little pocket

note-book as if it were all settled. "What is your address there?"

She fumbled in her purse which contained the address slip.

He reached down in his hip pocket and took out a fat purse. It was filled with slips of paper, some mileage books, a roll of greenbacks. It impressed her deeply. Such a purse had never been carried by any one attentive to her. Indeed, an experienced traveller, a brisk man of the world, had never come within such close range before. The purse, the shiny tan shoes, the smart new suit, and the *air* with which he did things, built up for her a dim world of fortune, of which he was the centre. It disposed her pleasantly toward all he might do.

He took out a neat business card, on which was engraved Bartlett, Caryoe & Company, and down in the left-hand corner, Chas. H. Drouet.

"That's me," he said, putting the card in her hand and touching his name. "It's pronounced Drew-eh. Our family was French, on my father's side."

She looked at it while he put up his purse. Then he got out a letter from a bunch in his coat pocket. "This is the house I travel for," he went on, pointing to a picture on it, "corner of State and Lake." There was pride on his voice. He felt that it was something to be connected with such a place, and he made her feel that way.

"What is your address?" he began again, fixing his pencil to write.

She looked at his hand.

"Carrie Meeber," she said slowly. "Three hundred and fifty-four West Van Buren Street, care S. C. Hanson."

He wrote it carefully down and got out the purse again. "You'll be at home if I come around Monday night?" he said.

"I think so," she answered. . .

SELECTION II

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe the manner and methods of the "masher." Have these characteristics changed in contemporary society? If so, how?

2. "Clothes make the man" is an epigram often used in English. How does the author express this idea? In what way is it important to the development of the final part of the chapter?

3. In this first chapter, does the author capture your interest so that you want to read the rest of the novel? Explain your answer.

4. Do you like Dreiser's style of writing? Cite reasons to support your answer.

5. Do you admire the "drummer?" Why or why not?

6. Are Dreiser's sympathies with the drummer or with Carrie? Give reasons for your answer. With whom do your sympathies lie? Why?

WRITING PRACTICE

1. Write a comparison of Dreiser and a writer of your own country who uses similar subject matter and writing style.

2. In *Sister Carrie*, as well as in three other novels, *Jennie Gerhardt*, *The "Genius,"* and *An American Tragedy*, Dreiser develops the view that the chaotic nature of life precludes spiritual satisfaction; consequently, it is normal and right for one to get the most he can from a society's economic system. Read two of the three other novels cited above and write a composition in which you demonstrate the way Dreiser presents this theme in each novel.

CHAPTER XXII

EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON

EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON (1869-1935)

Solitude tends to magnify one's ideas about individuality, it directs attention to neglect and sharpens one's sympathy with failure. . . . It renders a man suspicious of the whole natural plan and leads him to wonder whether the invisible powers are a fortuitous issue of misguided cosmos, or the cosmos itself everything is a kind of accident.

—Quoted in Louis Untermeyer's *Edwin Arlington Robinson: A Reappraisal*

Edwin Arlington Robinson (1869-1935) was a poet of transition. He lived at the time following the Civil War when America was rebuilding and changing rapidly and when the dominant values of the country seemed to be growing increasingly materialistic. Robinson's poetry was transitional, evaluating the present by using traditional forms and by including elements of transcendentalism and Puritanism.

Robinson spent his childhood in a small town in Maine, a town which furnished him a setting for many of his poems as well as models for his characters. His father was a prosperous merchant; his mother had been a schoolteacher. The parents were primarily interested in their two older sons and tended to ignore Edwin, though they recognized his exceptional intelligence. While fond of his family, Edwin felt himself an outsider among them, as he also felt alienated from the society of his town.

Robinson studied at Harvard from 1891 to 1893 and afterwards returned to Maine to stay for three years. Miserable and lonely most of the time, he moved to New York in 1895. His first volume of poems had been published while he was at home in Maine; in 1897 a second volume appeared. But he prospered neither as a poet nor as a businessman and ended by working as a checker of loads of shale during the building of the New York subway. In earning his living as a writer Robinson experienced the same difficulties as Hawthorne had fifty years before and was forced to the same humiliating expedients. Hawthorne checked sacks of coal as they were loaded in Boston Harbor; Robinson checked shale. Franklin Pierce, a grateful President, had rewarded his

friend and campaign biographer, Hawthorne, with a post in the Sales Customs House and then with a more lucrative post as consul in Liverpool. Just so another President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt, found Robinson's poetry impressive and helped him get a clerkship in the New York Customs House, where he worked until 1910. He sometimes may have encountered the ghost of Melville, who had spent the last lonely years of his life there, haunted by the feeling that he had failed as a writer.

Suddenly, with the poetic revival which preceded World War I, Robinson began to play a major role as a poet. After going his own way quietly for so many years, he became widely read and exerted a strong influence on other poets, notably Frost. He was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for poetry three times in the 1920's, a record exceeded only by Frost, who received the prize four times in all.

The core of Robinson's philosophy is the belief that man's highest duty is to develop his best attributes as fully as possible. Success is measured by the intensity and integrity of his struggle; failure consists only in a lack of effort. Robinson was most interested in people who had either failed spiritually, or who seemed failures to the world but had really succeeded in gaining spiritual wisdom. Despite his apparent pessimism he refused to subscribe to a naturalistic view of life. Being by nature introspective and conscious of psychological depths, he was acutely aware of the spiritual side of man and relatively uninterested in the surface aspects of man's life as a social creature.

Robinson's best known statement on the hollowness of conventional success is the lyric poem, "Richard Cory." Although everyone respects and envies Cory, one night he fires a bullet through his head. We are left asking why, and Robinson does not give an answer. We can only suppose that what other people think and feel is not as important as what a person himself believes. Since Cory knows his life is worthless in spite of his "success," he puts an end to it.

In the other poems included here we see Robinson's compassion and humor. They are differently blended in each poem. "Miniver Cheevy" is marked by a broad, hyperbolic humor. The character whom the poem displays is a figure of fun. However, the humor is wry; we can laugh at the drunkard who drinks to escape, only as long as we ignore his plight. There is more than a hint of self-portraiture in Miniver's deluded enchantment with a past which never was. The poem suggests, in a comic way, what Eugene O'Neill portrays in *The Iceman Cometh:* the survival value for the unsuccessful of delusion plus drink; for those who, like Cory, face up to the truth of things, a bullet may be inevitable.

We feel an even greater sympathy when we read "Mr. Flood's Party." For here is an old man, now completely friendless, his only company a jug of liquor. He is so lonely he talks to himself; so friendless that he has nothing left in life. Nevertheless, the situation Robinson describes to us is never mawkish. We sympathize, but we smile at the same time. Robinson uses mock-heroic comparisons and mock solemnity here with a delicate effect absent in "Miniver Cheevy." He invites our sympathy; he does not command it. When he compares Mr. Flood with the great medieval warrior Roland, blowing his horn to summon his comrades in an epic battle, he expects us to remember that splendid as Roland was in that battle, he died without his companions ever answering the call of his horn. Not the least of Robinson's skill

lies in another technique: his ability to manage rhythms and sounds to convey the meaning and mood of the poem. A good example is the perfectly modulated concluding lines of "Mr. Flood's Party." Robinson could have ended the poem with emphasis; he chooses instead to soften the rhythms and to diminish the ending with two dependent clauses. Our voice drops naturally and then levels off as we finish reading the poem—the old man's horn echoes and dies, unanswered.

Selection I

RICHARD CORY

Whenever Richard Cory went down town,
We people on the pavement looked at him:
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,
Clean favored, and imperially slim.

And he was always quietly arrayed,
And he was always human when he talked;
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,
"Good morning," and he glittered when he walked.

And he was rich—yes, richer than a king—
And admirably schooled in every grace:
In fine, we thought that he was everything
To make us wish that we were in his place.

So on we worked, and waited for the light,
And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
Went home and put a bullet through his head.

Selection II

MINIVER CHEEVY

Miniver Cheevy,[1] child of scorn,
Grew lean while he assailed the seasons;
He wept that he was ever born,
And he had reasons.

Miniver loved the days of old
  When swords were bright and steeds were prancing;
The vision of a warrior bold
  Would set him dancing.

Miniver sighed for what was not,
  And dreamed, and rested from his labors;
He dreamed of Thebes[2] and Camelot,[3]
  And Priam's neighbors.[4]

Miniver mourned the ripe renown
  That made so many a name so fragrant;
He mourned Romance, now on the town,[5]
  And Art, a vagrant.

Miniver loved the Medici,[6]
  Albeit he had never seen one;
He would have sinned incessantly
  Could he have been one.

Miniver cursed the commonplace
  And eyed a khaki suit with loathing;
He missed the medieval grace
  Of iron clothing.

Miniver scorned the gold he sought,
  But sore annoyed was he without it;
Miniver thought, and thought, and thought,
  And thought about it.

Miniver Cheevy, born too late,
  Scratched his head and kept on thinking;
Miniver coughed, and called it fate,
  And kept on drinking.

1. Miniver Cheevy: The name of the character gives a hint as to his personality. "Miniver" was a kind of fur popular during the Middle Ages. "Cheevy" echoes such adjectives as childish and peevish.
2. Thebes: name of two ancient cities, one in Egypt, the other in Greece.
3. Camelot: the legendary site of King Arthur's palace and court in southwestern England.
4. Priam's neighbors: Priam, the last king of Troy, an ancient city in Asia Minor. He perished in a war with his neighbors, the Greeks, who conquered Troy.
5. on the town: living on charity.
6. Medici: the ruling family of Florence, Italy, during the 15th and 16th centuries, noted both for their generous patronage of art and for lavish living and wickedness.

Selection III

MR. FLOOD'S PARTY

Old Eben Flood, climbing alone one night
Over the hill between the town below
And the forsaken upland hermitage
That held as much as he should ever know
On earth again of home, paused warily.
The road was his with not a native near;
And Eben, having leisure, said aloud,
For no man else in Tilbury Town to hear:

"Well, Mr. Flood, we have the harvest moon[1]
Again, and we may not have many more;
The bird is on the wing, the poet says,
And you and I have said it here before.
Drink to the bird." He raised up to the light

The jug that he had gone so far to fill,
And answered huskily: "Well, Mr. Flood,
Since you propose it, I believe I will."

Alone, as if enduring to the end
A valiant armor of scarred hopes outworn,
He stood there in the middle of the road
Like Roland's ghost winding a silent horn.[2]
Below him, in the town among the trees,
Where friends of other days had honored him,
A phantom salutation of the dead
Rang thinly till old Eben's eyes were dim.

Then, as a mother lays her sleeping child
Down tenderly, fearing it may awake,
He set the jug down slowly at his feet
With trembling care, knowing that most things break;
And only when assured that on firm earth
It stood, as the uncertain lives of men
Assuredly did not, he paced away,
And with his hand extended paused again:

"Well, Mr. Flood, we have not met like this
In a long time; and many a change has come

To both of us, I fear, since last it was
We had a drop together. Welcome home!"
Convivially returning with himself,
Again he raised the jug up to the light;
And with an acquiescent quaver said:
"Well, Mr. Flood, if you insist, I might.

"Only a very little, Mr. Flood—
For auld lang syne.[3] No more, sir; that will do."
So, for the time, apparently it did,
And Eben evidently thought so too;
For soon amid the silver loneliness
Of night he lifted up his voice and sang,
Secure, with only two moons listening,
Until the whole harmonious landscape rang—

"For auld lang syne." The weary throat gave out,
The last word wavered; and the song being done,
He raised again the jug regretfully
And shook his head, and was again alone.
There was not much that was ahead of him,
And there was nothing in the town below—
Where strangers would have shut the many doors
That many friends had opened long ago.

1. harvest moon: the full moon occurring nearest to the autumnal equinox (September 23). At that time there is full moonlight on cloudless nights almost from sunset to sunrise, which provides extra hours of light for farmers harvesting crops in the fields.
2. Roland: legendary hero of medieval France who, left to protect Charlemagne's retreat from invading Moslem armies, refused to blow his horn to call for help.
3. auld lang syne: literally, "old long ago," a Scottish phrase now used to mean "the good old times" or "old time's sake."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

RICHARD CORY

1. What details of the poem help to make the ending a surprise? Why do you think Cory killed himself?
2. What do you think the "light" is in the first line of the fourth stanza?
3. Does the poem say anything about human insight? Explain.
4. Compare the problem faced by Richard Cory with that of Miniver Cheevy. In what sense are their solutions to the problem similar?
5. What poetic character in your national literature is similar to Richard Cory? How?

MINIVER CHEEVY

1. Do you think Miniver really would have been happy in ancient Troy, Camelot, or in the Florence of the Medicis? Explain your answer.

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2. What emotion do you feel for Miniver? Explain your answer.

3. Compare Miniver with Eben Flood. Which do you admire most? Why?

4. Do you find humor in this poem? Cite examples.

MR. FLOOD'S PARTY

1. What do you think has brought Eben Flood to his present condition?

2. Describe the tone of "Mr. Flood's Party" and explain how the verse form and diction help create it.

3. Cite examples of the poet's (1) pessimism and (2) wry humor found in the poem.

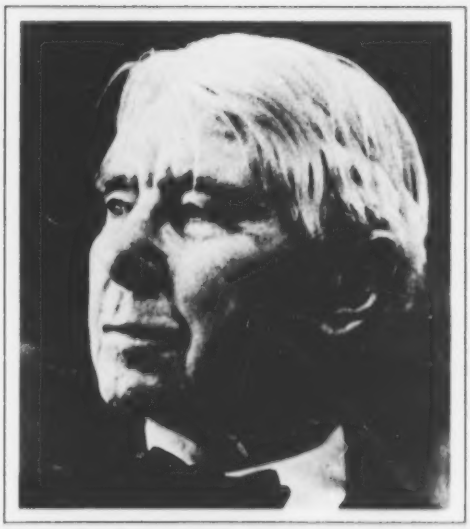
4. Explain in your own words the meaning of the following lines from stanza four: "He set the jug down slowly at his feet/ With trembling care, knowing that most things break./ And only when assured that on firm earth/ It stood, as the uncertain lives of men/ Assuredly did not . . ."

WRITING PRACTICE

Write a short composition based on each of these poems in which you conjecture as to what caused each of the men to withdraw from hard reality. Use your imagination!

CHAPTER XXIII

CARL SANDBURG



CARL SANDBURG (1878-1967)

I believe that free men the world over cherish the earth as cradle and tomb, the handiwork of their Maker, the possession of the family man.

I believe freedom comes the hard way—by ceaseless groping, toil, struggle—even by fiery trial and agony.

—Quoted in *Gallery of Americans*, p. 42.

I glory in this world of men and women, torn with troubles and lost in sorrow, yet living on to love and laugh and play through it all.—From *In Reckless Ecstasy* (his first book of poems, published in 1904)

The polar opposite of Robinson, Carl Sandburg (1878-1967) played the part of the simple workman, down to the cloth cap which he often wore. Nevertheless, he was an artist with words. His language was more colloquial and his rhythms looser than Robinson's; yet he too knew the value of form and poetic technique. As critic Louis Untermeyer puts it, there are "two Sandburgs: the muscular, heavy-fisted, hard-hitting son of the streets, and his almost unrecognizable twin, the shadow-painter, the haunter of mists, the lover of implications and overtones."

Sandburg was born in Galesburg, Illinois, of Swedish immigrant parents. He did odd jobs, served in the Spanish-American War, and worked his way through nearly four years of college afterward. From 1910 to 1912 he acted as secretary for the first Socialist mayor of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Not long afterward he attracted public notice with his increasingly powerful poetry, especially the poem, "Chicago," and he gradually became able to give most of his time to his writing. He did some literary journalism; he wrote ballads and books for children, and he continued with his serious poetry. And all the while, his interest in Abraham Lincoln deepened. He had grown up in Lincoln country and perhaps he thought of himself as a Lincolnesque figure. At any rate, he worked on the biography for years and by 1939 had completed the six-volume life of Lincoln which he considered his masterwork.

Imposing though the *Lincoln* is, however, his poetry promises to be more important. Of the poems reprinted below, "The Harbor" embodies both the lyrical poet and the muscular "son of the streets."

It is the kind of poem that made Sandburg famous: short, powerful, organic in form. The few lines are brief; when Sandburg comes to the end of a phrase he ends his line, and each line ends on an important word. The power of "The Harbor" comes from two vivid contrasts. One is between the imprisoning ugliness of the slums and the grace and freedom of the lake and the birds flying above it. The other is the contrast between the grim message and the graceful vocabulary employed.

This kind of poetry is called free verse, in distinction from poems such as the sonnet, the form of which is fixed by convention. Walt Whitman was the first American poet to write free verse, and Sandburg's poem "I Am the People, the Mob" resembles Whitman's work, not only in form but in feeling—the same high vision of American promise, formed not of abstractions but of the common stuff of life. It has the long lines and repetitious sentence structure that marked Whitman's great "Leaves of Grass." Sandburg's poem, like Whitman's, gains power from this repetition and accumulation. The opening words are several times repeated for emphasis and the lines—or rather, the verse paragraphs—build up and grow longer until the end. Sandburg finishes the poem with a short, staccato poetic statement. The central idea of the poem is realistically but optimistically democratic. Though the people suffer, they will triumph.

Such is the central idea also of the third poem by Sandburg, "The People Will Live On." It shows Sandburg's continued interest in poetic experimentation as well as his usual hearty optimism about the people. Composed in 1936, it reflects the then current aspirations of the New Deal. Not the least interesting thing about this poem is that, though a memorable piece of verse, it is by no means flawless. Some awkwardness results from the opposition of two kinds of language, one plain, the other ornate. An example of the first is "The learning and blundering people will live on." "The people is a polychrome, a spectrum and a prism, held in a moving monolith" is an instance of the second. This line is made awkward by Sandburg's use of "is" instead of "are," which more naturally follows "people".

Flaws and all, Carl Sandburg has been called the unofficial American poet laureate of the 30s and 40s, and rightly so. The title is a tribute to the rhythmic strength of his poetry and his prophetic faith:

I speak of new cities and new people.
I tell you the past is a bucket of ashes.
I tell you yesterday is a wind gone down,
A sun dropped in the west.

I tell you there is nothing in the world
only an ocean of to-morrows, a sky of to-morrows.

I am a brother of the cornhuskers who say
at sundown:
To-morrow is a day.
(from "Prairie," 1918)

Selection I

THE HARBOR

Passing through huddled and ugly walls
By doorways where women
Looked from their hunger-deep eyes,
Haunted with shadows of hunger-hands,
Out from the huddled and ugly walls,
I came sudden, at the city's edge,
On a blue burst of lake,
Long lake waves breaking under the sun
On a spray-flung curve of shore;
And a fluttering storm of gulls,
Masses of great gray wings
And flying white bellies
Veering and wheeling free in the open.

Selection II

I AM THE PEOPLE, THE MOB

I am the people—the mob—the crowd—the mass.
Do you know that all the great work of the world
is done through me?
I am the workingman, the inventor, the maker of
the world's food and clothes.
I am the audience that witnesses history. The Napoleons
come from me and the Lincolns.
They die. And then I send forth more Napoleons
and Lincolns.
I am the seed ground. I am a prairie that will stand
for much plowing. Terrible storms pass over
me. I forget. The best of me is sucked out and
wasted. I forget. Everything but Death comes
to me and makes me work and give up what I
have. And I forget.
Sometimes I growl, shake myself and spatter a
few red drops for history to remember. Then
—I forget.

When I, the People, learn to remember, when I,
the People, use the lessons of yesterday and
no longer forget who robbed me last year,
who played me for a fool,—then there will be
no speaker in all the world say the name:
"The People," with any fleck of a sneer in his
voice or any far-off smile of derision.
The mob—the crowd—the mass—will arrive
then.

Selection III

THE PEOPLE WILL LIVE ON

The people will live on.
The learning and blundering people will live on.
They will be tricked and sold and again sold
And go back to the nourishing earth for rootholds,
The people so peculiar in renewal and comeback,
You can't laugh off their capacity to take it.
The mammoth rests between his cyclonic dramas.

The people so often sleepy, weary, enigmatic,
is a vast huddle with many units saying:
"I earn my living.
I make enough to get by
and it takes all my time.
If I had more time
I could do more for myself
and maybe for others.
I could read and study
and talk things over
and find out about things.
It takes time.
I wish I had the time."

The people is a tragic and comic two-face: hero and
hoodlum: phantom and gorilla twisting to moan
with a gargoyle mouth: "They buy me and sell me
. . . it's a game. . . . sometime I'll break loose. . . ."

Once having marched
Over the margins of animal necessity,

Over the grim line of sheer subsistence
Then man came
To the deeper rituals of his bones,
To the lights lighter than any bones,
To the time for thinking things over,
To the dance, the song, the story,
Or the hours given over to dreaming,
Once having so marched.

Between the finite limitations of the five senses
and the endless yearnings of man for the beyond
the people hold to the humdrum bidding of work and
food
while reaching out when it comes their way
for lights beyond the prison of the five senses,
for keepsakes lasting beyond any hunger or death.
This reaching is alive.
The panderers and liars have violated and smutted it.
Yet this reaching is alive yet
for lights and keepsakes.

The people know the salt of the sea
and the strength of the winds
lashing the corners of the earth.
The people take the earth
as a tomb of rest and a cradle of hope.
Who else speaks for the Family of Man?
They are in tune and step
with constellations of universal law.

The people is a polychrome,
a spectrum and a prism
held in a moving monolith,
a console organ of changing themes,
a clavilux[1] of color poems
wherein the sea offers fog
and the fog moves off in rain
and the Labrador sunset shortens
to a nocturne of clear stars
serene over the shot spray
of northern lights.

The steel mill sky is alive.
The fire breaks white and zigzag
shot on a gun-metal gloaming.

Man is a long time coming.
Man will yet win.
Brother may yet line up with brother:

This old anvil laughs at many broken hammers.
There are men who can't be bought.
The fireborn are at home in fire.
The stars make no noise.
You can't hinder the wind from blowing.
Time is a great teacher.
Who can live without hope?

In the darkness with a great bundle of grief the people
march.
In the night, and overhead a shovel of stars for keeps,[2]
the people march:
"Where to? what next?"

1. clavilux: organ-like console keyed to colored lights instead of music.
2. for keeps: to keep, for their own.

SELECTIONS I-III

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the main idea expressed in "The Harbor"? How does the poet achieve the contrast he wants to emphasize?

2. Is "I am the People, the Mob" an optimistic or a pessimistic poem? Explain. Do you think the People eventually do learn to remember? How? Explain the meaning of the last line of the poem.

3. What does the poet gain by repeating himself at times in "The People Will Live On"? In your opinion, what is the hope expressed in the poem? Do you agree? What does the line "This old anvil laughs at many broken hammers" mean?

4. Do you think Sandburg's faith in the People is realistic? Give reasons to support your answer.

5. How does Sandburg's poetry differ in technique from that of Robinson? Which poet do you like better? Why?

6. "The People Will Live On" contains many pungent words. Which seem to you most striking or allusive, and what do they suggest? How do they contribute to the meaning of the poem?

CHAPTER XXIV

SINCLAIR LEWIS

SINCLAIR LEWIS (1885-1951)

(After praising Ernest Hemingway, Thomas Wolfe and other contemporary American writers.)

I salute them, with a joy in being not yet too far removed from their determination to give to the America that has mountains and endless prairies, enormous cities and lost farm cabins, billions of money and tons of faith, to an America that is as strange as Russia and as complex as China, a literature worthy of her vastness.

—from his Nobel Prize Address, December 12, 1930

Sinclair Lewis (1885-1951) was born in the town of Sauk Center, Minnesota. He was graduated from Yale after several unhappy years there, and then became an editor and writer. His early writing was commercial and undistinguished. But when he published *Main Street* in 1920, he proved that he had become a very effective novelist. *Main Street* immediately captured America's attention, as did Scott Fitzgerald's very different *This Side of Paradise*, published in the same year.

In his first important novel, Lewis established the methods and subject matter that would bring him world fame and eventually a Nobel Prize in Literature—the first American author to be so honored. That is, he described daily life in America with such a sharp eye and ear that readers could easily recognize it as part of their own experience. But he did it with such an emphasis on the comic and ridiculous that he made his readers laugh, in spite of themselves, at some of the silliness of their country. Like the noted satirists of the past, he wanted to do more than amuse. He wanted to reform the America he pictured by skillfully arousing his readers' sympathies for the non-conformist in a conformist society. The heroine of *Main Street* is a rebellious young woman who struggles hard to bring culture to her dead little town, and we feel a wry regret when in the end she decides to conform. However, Lewis' comic energy is so compelling that we cannot take her failure entirely seriously, though Sauk Center's inhabitants recognized themselves all too clearly at the time and took Lewis' lampooning so much to heart that it was years before the town could advertise itself to tourists as the model for *Main Street*.

The hero of *Babbitt*, Lewis' second highly successful novel, is as standard a middle-class businessman as if he had been put together on an assembly line. He appears to be a stereotype of millions of American men. He sells real estate and lives in a typical middle-class house. He has a typical family, a wife and three children. He expresses typical American prejudices. And yet Lewis shows us from the start that he has yearnings, fantasies of youth and love and escape, that we would not expect the stereotype to feel. The novel shows the slow rise and all too rapid failure of his efforts to be himself instead of falling into the typical mold. He is grumpily dissatisfied with the existence he leads. He tries a mild sexual adventure. He consorts briefly with radical thinkers. He expresses unorthodox ideas. But the people around him and above him are soon able to repress him, and like the heroine of *Main Street* he returns to conformity, to being like everyone else. "They've licked me," he admits. At the end of the novel all he can hope is that his children will do better, will find more in life, than he has, but it seems a spurious dream.

And yet *Babbitt* is never heavy—the hero is never allowed to be tragic. The book has all the gusto of *Main Street* but is more condensed, tighter in focus. Its caricatures are often comic, and many of the minor figures in the novel are pure caricature, as wildly improbable as those of Charles Dickens.

Sinclair Lewis went on to write many novels about other aspects of American life. He grew to be perhaps the most popular novelist of his time. He often pictured America as if it were an advertising poster, with flashy colors and sharp lines; in *Arrowsmith*, the story of a young doctor, he achieved something more seriously novelistic, and also drew one of his rare believable portraits of a woman. No one captured the farce of American life as truly as he did. Sometimes he conveyed the pathos of it also. We can see the combination best, perhaps, in the opening of *Babbitt*, which shows us the average businessman waking up to start an average day. It begins at home, where he is with his wife.

SELECTION 1

from Babbitt, Chapter 1

I

The towers of Zenith aspired above the morning mist; austere towers of steel and cement and limestone, sturdy as cliffs and delicate as silver rods. They were neither citadels nor churches, but frankly and beautifully office-buildings.

The mist took pity on the fretted structures of earlier generations: the Post Office with its shingle-tortured mansard, the red brick minarets of hulking old houses, factories with stingy and sooted windows, wooden tenements colored like mud. The city was full of such grotesqueries, but the clean towers were thrusting them from the business center, and on the farther hills were shining new houses, homes—they seemed—for laughter and tranquility.

Over a concrete bridge fled a limousine of long sleek hood and noiseless engine. These people in evening clothes were returning from an all-night rehearsal of a Little Theater[1] play, an artistic adventure considerably illuminated by champagne. Below the bridge curved a railroad, a maze of green and crimson lights. The New

1. Little Theater: theater especially for amateurs.

York Flyer[2] boomed past, and twenty lines of polished steel leaped into the glare.

In one of the skyscrapers the wires of the Associated Press[3] were closing down. The telegraph operators wearily raised their celluloid eye-shades after a night of talking with Paris and Peking. Through the building crawled the scrubwomen, yawning, their old shoes slapping. The dawn mist spun away. Cues of men with lunch-boxes clumped toward the immensity of new factories, sheets of glass and hollow tile, glittering shops where five thousand men worked beneath one roof, pouring out the honest wares that would be sold up the Euphrates and across the veldt. The whistles rolled out in greeting a chorus cheerful as the April dawn; the song of labor in a city built—it seemed—for giants.

II

There was nothing of the giant in the aspect of the man who was beginning to awaken on the sleeping-porch of a Dutch Colonial house in that residential district of Zenith known as Floral Heights.

His name was George F. Babbitt. He was forty-six years old now, in April, 1920, and he made nothing in particular, neither butter nor shoes nor poetry, but he was nimble in the calling of selling houses for more than people could afford to pay.

His large head was pink, his brown hair thin and dry. His face was babyish in slumber, despite his wrinkles and the red spectacle-dents on the slopes of his nose. He was not fat but he was exceedingly well fed; his cheeks were pads, and the unroughened hand which lay helpless upon the khaki-colored blanket was slightly puffy. He seemed prosperous, extremely married and unromantic; and altogether unromantic appeared this sleeping-porch, which looked on one sizable elm, two respectable grass-plots, a cement drive-way, and a corrugated iron garage. Yet Babbitt was again dreaming of the fairy child, a dream more romantic than scarlet pagodas by a silver sea.

For years the fairy child had come to him. Where others saw but Georgie Babbitt, she discerned gallant youth. She waited for him, in the darkness beyond mysterious groves. When at last he could slip away from the crowded house he darted to her. His wife, his clamoring friends, sought to follow, but he escaped, the girl fleet beside him, and they crouched together on a shadowy hillside. She was so slim, so white, so eager! She cried that he was gay and valiant, that she would wait for him, that they would sail—

Rumble and bang of the milk-truck.

Babbitt moaned, turned over, struggled back toward his dream. He could see only her face now, beyond misty waters. The furnace-man slammed the basement door. A dog barked in the next yard. As Babbitt sank blissfully into a dim warm tide, the paper-carrier went by whistling, and the rolled-up *Advocate* thumped the front door. Babbitt roused, his stomach constricted with alarm. As he relaxed, he was pierced by the familiar and irritating rattle of some one cranking a Ford: snap-ah-ah, snap-ah-ah, snap-ah-ah. Himself a pious motorist, Babbitt cranked with the unseen driver, with him waited through taut hours for the roar of the starting engine, with him agonized as the roar ceased and again began the infernal patient snap-ah-ah—a 'round, flat sound, a shivering cold-morning sound, a sound infuriating and

2. New York Flyer: name of a famous express train.
3. Associated Press: American news agency which gathers and distributes news for newspapers and radio and television stations.

inescapable. Not till the rising voice of the motor told him that the Ford was moving was he released from the panting tension. He glanced once at his favorite tree, elm twigs against the gold patina of sky, and tumbled for sleep as for a drug. He who had been a boy very credulous of life was no longer greatly interested in the possible and improbable adventures of each new day.

He escaped from reality till the alarm-clock rang, at seven-twenty.

SELECTION I

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the author create the feeling of the first stirrings of a city in the early morning?
2. From this first contact with Babbitt, what kind of person do you imagine him to be? Do you feel that you will like him? Why or why not?
3. What is the significance of his dream?
4. What descriptive passages place the time of the setting in 1920?
5. Does this first selection hold your interest and make you want to read on? Explain.

SELECTION II

from Babbitt, Chapter 1 (continued)

III

It was the best of nationally advertised and quantitatively produced alarm-clocks, with all modern attachments, including cathedral chime, intermittent alarm, and a phosphorescent dial. Babbitt was proud of being awakened by such a rich device. Socially it was almost as creditable as buying expensive cord tires.

He sulkily admitted now that there was no more escape, but he lay and detested the grind of the real-estate business, and disliked his family, and disliked himself for disliking them. The evening before, he had played poker at Vergil Gunch's till midnight, and after such holidays he was irritable before breakfasts. It may have been the tremendous home-brewed beer of the prohibition-era[1] and the cigars to which that beer enticed him; it may have been resentment of return from this fine, bold man-world to a restricted region of wives and stenographers, and of suggestions not to smoke so much.

From the bedroom beside the sleeping-porch, his wife's detestably cheerful "Time to get up, Georgie boy," and the itchy sound, the brisk and scratchy sound, of combing hairs out of a stiff brush.

He grunted; he dragged his thick legs in faded baby-blue pajamas, from under the khaki blanket; he sat on the edge of the cot, running his fingers through his wild hair, while his plump feet mechanically felt for his slippers. He looked regretfully at

1. prohibition-era: the years from 1920 to 1933, when the 18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution forbade the manufacture, sale, import and export of alcoholic drinks. During this time many people made beer, wine, and stronger drinks illegally in their homes. The 21st Amendment ended the Prohibition period.

the blanket—forever a suggestion to him of freedom and heroism. He had bought it for a camping trip which had never come off. It symbolized gorgeous loafing, gorgeous cursing, virile flannel shirts.

He creaked to his feet, groaning at the waves of pain which passed behind his eyeballs. Though he waited for their scorching recurrence, he looked blurrily out at the yard. It delighted him, as always; it was the neat yard of a successful business man of Zenith, that is, it was perfection, and made him also perfect. He regarded the corrugated iron garage. For the three-hundred-and-sixty-fifth time in a year he reflected, "No class to that tin shack. Have to build me a frame garage. But by golly it's the only thing on the place that isn't up-to-date!" While he stared he thought of a community garage for his acreage development, Glen Oriole. He stopped puffing and jiggling. His arms were akimbo. His petulant, sleep-swollen face was set in harder lines. He suddenly seemed capable, an official, a man to contrive, to direct, to get things done.

On the vigor of his idea he was carried down the hard, clean, unused-looking hall into the bathroom.

Though the house was not large it had, like all houses on Floral Heights, an altogether royal bathroom of porcelain and glazed tile and metal sleek as silver. The towel-rack was a rod of clear glass set in nickel. The tub was long enough for a Prussian Guard, and above the set bowl was a sensational exhibit of tooth-brush holder, shaving-brush holder, soap-dish, sponge-dish, and medicine-cabinet, so glittering and so ingenious that they resembled an electrical instrument-board. But the Babbitt whose god was Modern Appliances was not pleased. The air of the bathroom was thick with the smell of a heathen toothpaste. "Verona been at it again! 'Stead of sticking to Lilidol,[2] like I've re-peat-ed-ly asked her, she's gone and gotten some confounded stinkum[3] stuff that makes you sick!"

The bath-mat was wrinkled and the floor was wet. (His daughter Verona eccentrically took baths in the morning, now and then.) He slipped on the mat, and slid against the tub, he said "Damn!" Furiously he snatched up his tube of shaving-cream, furiously he lathered, with a belligerent slapping of the unctuous brush, furiously he raked his plump cheeks with a safety-razor. It pulled. The blade was dull. He said, "Damn—oh—oh—damn it!"

He hunted through the medicine-cabinet for a packet of new razor-blades (reflecting, as invariably, "Be cheaper to buy one of these dinguses[4] and strop your own blades,") and when he discovered the packet, behind the round box of bicarbonate of soda, he thought ill of his wife for putting it there and very well of himself for not saying, "Damn." But he did say it, immediately afterward, when with wet and soap-slippery fingers he tried to remove the horrible little envelope and crisp clinging oiled paper from the new blade.

Then there was the problem, oft-pondered, never solved, of what to do with the old blade, which might imperil the fingers of his young. As usual, he tossed it on top of the medicine-cabinet, with a mental note that some day he must remove the fifty or sixty other blades that were also temporarily piled up there. He finished his shaving in a growing testiness increased by his spinning headache and

2. Lilidol: brand name, invented by Lewis, for a variety of toothpaste.
3. stinkum: slang word formed from "stink" (to emit a strong, offensive odor) and the suffix "-um" (used here in place of "-ing").
4. dinguses: a thing whose proper name is unknown or momentarily forgotten.

by the emptiness in his stomach. When he was done, his round face smooth and streamy and his eyes stinging from soapy water, he reached for a towel. The family towels were wet, wet and clammy and vile, all of them wet, he found, as he blindly snatched them—his own face-towel, his wife's, Verona's, Ted's, Tinka's and the lone bath-towel with the huge welt of initial. Then George F. Babbitt did a dismaying thing. He wiped his face on the guest-towel! It was a pansy-embroidered trifle which always hung there to indicate that the Babbitts were in the best Floral Heights society. No one had ever used it. No guest had ever dared to. Guests secretively took a corner of the nearest regular towel.

He was raging, "By golly, here they go and use up all the towels, every doggone[5] one of 'em, and they use 'em and get 'em all wet and sopping, and never put out a dry one for me—of course, I'm the goat! —and then I want one and —I'm the only person in the doggone house that's got the slightest doggone bit of consideration for other people and thoughtfulness and consider there may be others that may want to use the doggone bathroom after me and consider—"

He was pitching the chill abominations into the bath-tub, pleased by the vindictiveness of that desolate flapping sound; and in the midst his wife serenely trotted in, observed serenely, "Why Georgie dear, what are you doing? Are you going to wash out the towels? Why, you needn't wash out the towels. Oh, Georgie, you didn't go and use the guest towel, did you?"

It is not recorded that he was able to answer.

For the first time in weeks he was sufficiently roused by his wife to look at her.

[5] doggone: slang word expressing mild frustration or irritation; euphemism for damned.

SELECTION II

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think the author describes Babbitt's morning ritual in such detail?
2. What opinion did you form of Babbitt after observing him in this ritual?
3. From what you have seen thus far, what do you conclude are the important things in life for George Babbitt?
4. What impression do you get of Babbitt's wife? What is the implication of the last line of the selection?
5. Have you known any "Babbitts" in your life? If so, compare them to Lewis' fictional creation.
6. Why is Babbitt a successful businessman?
7. How do Lewis and Dreiser differ most as writers?
8. Is there a writer in your national literature whom you would compare with Sinclair Lewis? In what specific ways?

CHAPTER XXV

HENRY L. MENCKEN

H. L. MENCKEN (1880-1956)

Every third American devotes himself to improving and uplifting his fellow-citizens, usually by force.
—from his *Prejudices: First Series*

Bachelors know more about women than married men. If they didn't they'd be married too.
—from his *Chrestomathy*, 621

A celebrity is one who is known to many persons he is glad he doesn't know.
—from his *Chrestomathy*, 617

Conscience—the accumulate sediment of ancestral faint-heartedness.
—quoted in *Smart Set*, Dec., 1921

The most costly of all follies is to believe passionately in the palpably not true. It is the chief occupation of mankind.
—from his *Chrestomathy*, 616

A central figure in American intellectual life during the 1920s was Henry L. Mencken (1880-1956). His monumental but highly entertaining study, *The American Language*, which appeared in 1919 (fourth edition, 1936, with supplementary volumes in 1945 and 1948), is still an outstanding work of philological scholarship, although Mencken always insisted that he was not a scholar but "one who pointed out the quarry for scholars to bag." The book contrasted American English with British English, explained the origin of many colorful American slang expressions, examined uniquely American geographical and personal names, and traced the influence of immigrant languages on the American idiom.

In the 20's Mencken emerged as the busiest opponent of the forces which Sinclair Lewis satirized. With a caustic pen he derided the smugness of the middle-class businessman, the narrowness of American cultural life, and the harshness of American Puritanism. He made war on all these, though unlike Lewis's, his attack was devastatingly direct, with invective as a substitute for caricature and with no trace of obliqueness or subtlety.

The *American Mercury*, which he edited, was the most influential magazine of its time. What he wanted to do in its pages was, as he once put it, "to stir up the animals." He wanted to arouse his antagonists, and he usually succeeded. He was one of the most detested, as well as one of the most respected, men in America. In his own writing, even more than in his editing, he showed that nothing was sacred to him. No advocate of democracy, he called the American people a "timorous, sniveling, poltroonish, ignominious mob of serfs." And with him "mob" had none of the affection with which Sandburg invested the term. He was just as much of an iconoclast in his attack on the churches, on business, and on government.

What made him read widely by Americans was not that he attacked them but that he did so with such verve and gusto. He had a rollicking, rambunctious style of writing and his piling on of language was so extravagant that even his sarcasms became palatable. He meant what he said, but he said it with wit.

As an old-fashioned liberal, he believed in as much freedom for the individual as possible and in correspondingly limited

government. He believed that the worst threat to freedom in the 20s was from the country's religious zealots. He fought their attempts to censor literature and drama, and denied their right to tell him or anyone else what to read or see. He also resisted their efforts to tell him how to behave —especially what to drink. When liquor was prohibited in America for thirteen years by the efforts of teetotalers, largely members of fundamentalist religious sects, Mencken bitterly opposed the law for every one of those years until Prohibition was repealed.

The leading champion of the forces he fought against was a prairie orator and religious fundamentalist named William Jennings Bryan. We can see how influential Bryan was from the fact that the Democratic Party three times nominated him for the Presidency of the United States. In the 1920s he was an old but still powerful man, a symbol of conservatism in religion and thought.

In 1925 the state of Tennessee passed a law that prohibited the teaching of the Darwinian theory of evolution in its schools. A young teacher named Scopes defied the law, was arrested and tried. The trial in Dayton, Tennessee, in some ways resembled a circus. But it was serious, too, for here the forces led by Mencken met the forces of Bryanism. Mencken reported on the trial for his newspapers, with his most memorable article coming at the end. When the trial was done—and Scopes convicted—Bryan suddenly died. Mencken wrote his epitaph in a brilliant, biting newspaper report which he soon turned into an essay. It is reprinted here, both for what it says and how it says it. This essay is Mencken's criticism not only of the dead Bryan but of all he stood for. It is sometimes hard to follow because of Mencken's trick of using odd or unexpected words for surprise or comic effect in an otherwise normal sentence. Although his style may be difficult occasionally, he was perhaps the best, certainly the liveliest, essayist of his era.

SELECTION 1

In Memorian: W.J.B.

Has it been duly marked by historians that William Jennings Bryan's last secular act on this globe of sin was to catch flies? A curious detail, and not without its sardonic overtones. He was the most sedulous fly-catcher in American history, and in many ways the most successful. His quarry, of course, was not *Musca domestica*[1] but *Homo neanderthalensis*[2]. For forty years he tracked it with coo and bellow,[3] up and down the rustic backways of the Republic. Wherever the flambeaux of Chautauqua[4] smoked and guttered, and the bilge of idealism ran in the veins, and Baptist pastors damned the brooks with the sanctified,[5] and men gathered who were weary and heavy laden, and their wives who were full of Peruna[6] and as fecund as the shad (*Alosa sapidissima*), there the indefatigable Jennings set up his traps and spread his bait. He knew every country town in the South and West, and he could crowd the most remote of them to suffocation by simply winding his horn. The city proletariat, transiently flustered by him in 1896, quickly penetrated his

1. *Musca domestica*: the common fly.
2. *Homo neanderthalensis*: Neanderthal man, predecessor of modern man, who first appeared about 75,000 years ago.
3. with coo and bellow: softly and loudly.
4. Chautauqua: an adult education movement organized in 1874 in Chautauqua, New York. It combined religious instruction with entertainment and lectures in the arts and humanities.
5. damned the brooks with the sanctified: literally, filled the streams with people being baptized, from the practice of baptizing new converts to the faith by immersing them completely in water.
6. Peruna: a patent medicine popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

buncombe[7] and would have no more of him; the cockney gallery[8] jeered him at every Democratic national convention for twenty-five years. But out where the grass grows high, and the horned cattle dream away the lazy afternoons, and men still fear the powers and principalities of the air—out there between the corn-rows he held his old puissance to the end. There was no need of beaters to drive in his game. The news that he was coming was enough. For miles the flivver[9] dust would choke the roads. And when he rose at the end of the day to discharge his Message there would be such breathless attention, such a rapt and enchanted ecstasy, such a sweet rustle of amens as the world had not known since Johann fell to Herod's ax.[10]

There was something peculiarly fitting in the fact that his last days were spent in a one-horse[11] Tennessee village, beating off the flies and gnats, and that death found him there. The man felt at home in such simple and Christian scenes. He liked people who sweated freely, and were not debauched by the refinements of the toilet. Making his progress up and down the Main street of little Dayton, surrounded by gaping primates from the upland valleys of the Cumberland Range,[12] his coat laid aside, his bare arms and hairy chest shining damply, his bald head sprawled with dust—so accoutred and on display, he was obviously happy. He liked getting up early in the morning, to the tune of cocks crowing on the dunghill. He liked the heavy, greasy victuals of the farmhouse kitchen. He liked country lawyers, country pastors, all country people. He liked country sounds and country smells.

I believe that this liking was sincere—perhaps the only sincere thing in the man. His nose showed no uneasiness when a hillman in faded overalls and hickory shirt accosted him on the street, and besought him for light upon some mystery of Holy Writ.[13] The simian gabble of the crossroads was not gabble to him, but wisdom of an occult and superior sort. In the presence of city folks he was palpably uneasy. Their clothes, I suspect, annoyed him, and he was suspicious of their too delicate manners. He knew all the while that they were laughing at him—if not at his baroque theology, then at least at his alpaca pantaloons. But the yokels never laughed at him. To them he was not the huntsman but the prophet, and toward the end, as he gradually forsook mundane politics for more ghostly concerns, they began to elevate him in their hierarchy. When he died he was the peer of Abraham. His old enemy, Wilson,[14] aspiring to the same white and shining robe, came down with a thump. But Bryan made the grade. His place in Tennessee hagiography is secure. If the village barber saved any of his hair, then it is curing gallstones down there today.

But what label will he bear in more urbane regions? One, I fear, of a far less flattering kind. Bryan lived too long, and descended too deeply into the mud, to be taken seriously hereafter by fully literate men, even of the kind who write schoolbooks. There was a scattering of sweet words in his funeral notices, but it was no more than a response to conventional sen-

7. buncombe: nonsense; insincere talk.
8. cockney gallery: city people.
9. flivver: a small, cheap car, especially the early model Fords.
10. Johann fell to Herod's ax: John the Baptist was beheaded by Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee.
11. one-horse: insignificant, because unable to support or use more than one horse.
12. Cumberland Range: a branch of the Appalachian Mountains in Tennessee and Kentucky.
13. Holy Writ: the Bible.
14. Wilson: Woodrow Wilson, 28th President of the U.S., from 1913 to 1921.

timentality. The best verdict the most romantic editorial writer could dredge up, save in the humorless South, was to the general effect that his imbecilities were excused by his earnestness—that under his clowning, as under that of the juggler of Notre Dame,[15] there was the zeal of a steadfast soul. But this was apology, not praise; precisely the same thing might be said of Mary Baker G. Eddy.[16] The truth is that even Bryan's sincerity will probably yield to what is called, in other fields, definitive criticism. Was he sincere when he opposed imperialism in the Philippines, or when he fed it with deserving Democrats in Santo Domingo? Was he sincere when he tried to shove the Prohibitionists[17] under the table, or when he seized their banner and began to lead them with loud whoops? Was he sincere when he bellowed against war, or when he dreamed of himself as a tin-soldier in uniform, with a grave reserved at Arlington[18] among the generals? Was he sincere when he fawned over Champ Clark,[19] or when he betrayed Clark? Was he sincere when he pleaded for tolerance in New York, or when he bawled for the faggot and the stake in Tennessee?

15. juggler of Notre Dame: Quasimodo, the hunchback bell ringer of the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Victor Hugo's novel, *Notre Dame of Paris*.
16. Mary Baker G. Eddy: formulator of the principles of Christian Science and founder of the church based on those principles.
17. Prohibitionists: those who favored and supported the prohibition of the manufacture, sale, import and export of alcoholic drinks in the U.S.
18. Arlington: Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C., where many famous American military leaders are buried.
19. Champ Clark: American legislator and leader of the Democratic party in the House of Representatives who was the leading candidate for the Democratic nomination for President in 1912; however, William Jennings Bryan shifted his support to Woodrow Wilson, who won the nomination and the election.

SELECTION I

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was the last thing, according to Mencken, that Bryan did before he died? What sort of flies was he catching?
2. What sort of people did Bryan like? How does Mencken feel about them?
3. What can be said in Bryan's defense?
4. What does Mencken mean when he says "When he died he was the peer of Abraham"?
5. How would you describe Bryan as pictured by Mencken?

SELECTION II

In Memoriam: W.J.B. (Concluded)

This talk of sincerity, I confess, fatigues me. If the fellow was sincere, then so was P. T. Barnum.[1] The word is disgraced and degraded by such uses. He was, in fact a charlatan, a mountebank, a zany without sense or dignity. His career brought him into contact with the first men of his time; he preferred the company of rustic ignoramuses. It was hard to believe, watching him at Dayton, that he had traveled, that he had been received in civilized societies, that he had been a high officer of state. He seemed only a poor clod like those around

1. P. T. Barnum: American showman and promoter (1810-1891) who was known for extravagant and exaggerated advertising.

him, deluded by a childish theology, full of an almost pathological hatred of all learning, all human dignity, all beauty, all fine and noble things. He was a peasant come home to the barnyard. Imagine a gentleman, and you have imagined everything that he was not. What animated him from end to end of his grotesque career was simply ambition—the ambition of a common man to get his hand upon the collar of his superiors, or, failing that, to get his thumb into their eyes. He was born with a roaring voice, and it had the trick of inflaming half-wits. His whole career was devoted to raising those half-wits against their betters, that he himself might shine.

His last battle will be grossly misunderstood if it is thought of as a mere excercise in fanaticism—that is, if Bryan the Fundamentalist[2] Pope is mistaken for one of the bucolic Fundamentalists. There was much more in it than that, as everyone knows who saw him on the field. What moved him, at bottom, was simply hatred of the city men who had laughed at him so long, and brought him at last to so tatterdemalion an estate. He lusted for revenge upon them. He yearned to lead the anthropoid rabble against them, to punish them for their execution upon him by attacking the very vitals of their civilization. He went far beyond the bounds of any merely religious frenzy, however inordinate. When he began denouncing the notion that man is a mammal even some of the hinds at Dayton were agape. And when, brought upon Clarence Darrow's[3] cruel hook, he writhed and tossed in a very fury of malignancy, bawling against the veriest elements of sense and decency like a man frantic—when he came to that tragic climax of his striving there were snickers among the hinds as well as hosannas.

Upon that hook, in truth, Bryan committed suicide, as a legend as well as in the body. He staggered from the rustic court ready to die, and he staggered from it ready to be forgotten, save as a character in a third-rate farce, witless and in poor taste. It was plain to everyone who knew him, when he came to Dayton, that his great days were behind him—that, for all the fury of his hatred, he was now definitely an old man, and headed at last for silence. There was a vague, unpleasant manginess about his appearance; he somehow seemed dirty, though a close glance showed him as carefully shaven as an actor, and clad in immaculate linen. All the hair was gone from the dome of his head, and it had begun to fall out, too, behind his ears, in the obscene manner of Samuel Gompers.[4] The resonance had departed from his voice; what was once a bugle blast had become reedy and quavering. Who knows that, like Demosthenes,[5] he had a lisp? In the old days, under the magic of his eloquence, no one noticed it. But when he spoke at Dayton it was always audible.

When I first encountered him, on the sidewalk in front of the office of the rustic lawyers who were his associates in the Scopes case, the trial was yet to begin, and so he was still expansive and amiable. I had printed in the *Nation*, a week or so before, an article arguing that the Tennessee anti-

2. Fundamentalist: a believer in or member of a religious movement arising among conservative members of various Protestant denominations early in the 20th century. Fundamentalists believe in the infallibility and literal correctness of the Bible.

3. Clarence Darrow: American lawyer (1857-1938) who defended Scopes in the 1925 Tennessee evolution trial and who opposed the beliefs of Bryan.

4. Samuel Gompers: American labor leader (1850-1924) and a founder and first president of the American Federation of Labor.

5. Demosthenes: Greek lawyer and orator (384-322 B.C.) who supposedly had a speech defect.

evolution law, whatever its wisdom, was at least constitutional—that the yahoos[6] of the State had a clear right to have their progeny taught whatever they chose, and kept secure from whatever knowledge violated their superstitions. The old boy professed to be delighted with the argument, and gave the gaping bystanders to understand that I was a publicist of parts. Not to be outdone, I admired the preposterous country shirt that he wore—sleeveless and with the neck cut very low. We parted in the manner of two ambassadors.

But that was the last touch of amiability that I was destined to see in Bryan. The next day the battle joined and his face became hard. By the end of the week he was simply a walking fever. Hour by hour he grew more bitter. What the Christian Scientists call malicious animal magnetism seemed to radiate from him like heat from a stove. From my place in the courtroom, standing upon a table, I looked directly down upon him, sweating horribly and pumping his palm-leaf fan. His eyes fascinated me; I watched them all day long. They were blazing points of hatred. They glittered like occult and sinister gems. Now and then they wandered to me, and I got my share, for my reports of the trial had come back to Dayton, and he had read them. It was like coming under fire.

Thus he fought his last fight, thirsting savagely for blood. All sense departed from him. He bit right and left, like a dog with rabies. He descended to demagogy so dreadful that his very associates at the trial table blushed. His one yearning was to keep his yokels heated up—to lead his forlorn mob of imbeciles against the foe. That foe, alas, refused to be alarmed. It insisted upon seeing the whole battle as a comedy. Even Darrow, who knew better, occasionally yielded to the prevailing spirit. One day he lured poor Bryan into the folly I have mentioned: his astounding argument against the notion that man is a mammal. I am glad I heard it, for otherwise I'd never believe it. There stood the man who had been thrice a candidate for the Presidency of the Republic—there he stood in the glare of the world, uttering stuff that a boy of eight would laugh at. The artful Darrow led him on: he repeated it, ranted for it, bellowed it in his cracked voice. So he was prepared for the final slaughter. He came into life a hero, a Galahad[7] in bright and shining armor. He was passing out a poor mountebank.

6. Yahoo: in the U.S., an uncouth country fellow.

7. Galahad: a hero of the King Arthur legend of medieval English literature, the noblest and purest of the knights of Christendom according to the legend.

SELECTION II

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. According to Mencken, what was the driving force in Bryan?
2. How does Mencken's description of Bryan make us dislike him? Do you think this form of criticism is the most effective?
3. Can faults in a public figure be excused by his sincerity? Does Mencken in fact give Bryan credit for being sincere?
4. Summarize what you believe to be Mencken's major criticism of Bryan.
5. How does Mencken's vocabulary differ from that of Sinclair Lewis?
6. How would you describe Mencken's style of writing? Does it appeal to you? Explain why or why not.

CHAPTER XXVI

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD (1896-1940)

This is what I think now: that the natural state of the sentient adult is a qualified unhappiness. I think also that in an adult the desire to be finer in grain than you are, a constant striving (as those people say who gain their bread by saying it) only adds to this unhappiness in the end—that end that comes to our youth and hope. My own happiness in the past often approached such ecstasy that I could not share it even with the person dearest to me but had to walk it away in quiet streets and lanes with only fragments of it to distill into little lines in books—and I think that my happiness, or talent for self-delusion or what you will, was an exception. It was not the natural thing but the unnatural.

—from an autobiographical sketch written in April 1936 for *Esquire* magazine. The sketches appeared in more permanent form in Edmund Wilson's posthumous collection of Fitzgerald prose, called *The Crack-Up* (1945).

F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940) was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, but the Middle West was not the setting for any of his major works. After he entered New Jersey's socially prestigious Princeton University he tried to eradicate his origins, though he was unhappy at college in many ways and felt keenly his inferiority to such classmates as the brilliant literary critic, Edmund Wilson, and to all those others who were born rich and born Easterners. When the United States entered World War I, he enlisted in the Army, and in a training camp in Alabama met Zelda, the Southern belle who became his wife and who was the model for most of the beautiful, gay heroines of his fiction. He became a writer in order to earn enough money to marry her, and his life with her furnished his greatest happiness as well as his greatest misery and pain.

His first novel, *This Side of Paradise*, was published in 1920, the same year as Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*, but the two novels reflect two completely different worlds. Fitzgerald's concerns the world of youth, excited though somewhat cynical, and the parties and love affairs of the rich and the would-be rich; Lewis' deals with solid middle-class citizens of Minnesota, where both writers were born not too many miles apart. Fitzgerald was the spokesman for youth; he sensed the romantic yearnings of the time, and the yearnings of the Jazz Age, and he put them into his fiction. By comparison, Lewis' young heroine seems old-fashioned, stodgy and idealistic, not at all the "new" woman.

Fitzgerald's best novel, *The Great Gatsby*, was published in 1925. By then Fitzgerald was himself rich, though his earnings could never keep pace with his and

Zelda's extravagance. He had attained undeniable success as a writer, a serious novelist, and prolific producer of pot-boilers —short stories for slick magazines. He also knew that between the peaks of joy were periods of sorrow; and as the decade went on, the high points became fewer, the sorrow truly terrible. *The Great Gatsby* reflects Fitzgerald's deeper knowledge, his recognition that wanting to be happy does not insure one's being so and that pursuit of entertainment may only cover a lot of pain.

The parts of Chapter 3 reprinted below describe one of Gatsby's fabulous parties at his expensive, rented estate outside of New York. The person telling the story, Nick Carraway, is Fitzgerald's spokesman for decent, rational men. Gatsby, with his vast new wealth acquired by breaking the Prohibition laws, represents extravagance and optimism and the desperate need of the outsider to "belong." The chapter begins with Carraway's description of the elaborate preparations for Gatsby's parties, which he could watch because he lived in the house next door to Gatsby. The book then tells what happened at the first of the parties he attended.

What distinguishes these pages is their remarkable evocation of an atmosphere of conflict and paradox. The party is crowded and yet empty. The night is beautiful but garish, the scene made of tinsel. Fitzgerald's skill lies in his making a reader experience both emotions at once, and keenly. The scene epitomizes the Jazz Age, its superficiality and tawdriness and its equally powerful sweetness and charm.

SELECTION I

From The Great Gatsby

Chapter III

There was music from my neighbor's house through the summer nights. In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars. At high tide in the afternoon I watched his guests diving from the tower of his raft, or taking the sun on the hot sand of his beach while his two motor-boats slit the waters of the Sound,[1] drawing aquaplanes over cataracts of foam. On week-ends his Rolls-Royce[2] became an omnibus, bearing parties to and from the city between nine in the morning and long past midnight, while his station wagon scampered like a brisk yellow bug to meet all trains. And on Mondays eight servants, including an extra gardener, toiled all day with mops and scrubbing-brushes and hammers and garden-shears, repairing the ravages of the night before.

Every Friday five crates of oranges and lemons arrived from a fruiterer in New York—every Monday these same oranges and lemons left his back door in a pyramid of pulpless halves. There was a machine in the kitchen which could extract the juice of two hundred oranges in half an hour if a little button was pressed two hundred times by a butler's thumb.

At least once a fortnight a corps of caterers came down with several hundred feet of canvas and enough colored lights to make a Christmas tree of Gatsby's enormous garden. On buffet tables, garnished with glistening hors-d'oeuvre, spiced baked hams crowded against salads of harlequin designs and pastry pigs and turkeys bewitched to a dark gold. In the main hall a bar with a real brass rail was set up, and stocked with gins and liquors and with cordials so long forgotten that most of his

1. the Sound: Long Island Sound, a narrow finger of the Atlantic Ocean between Long Island and the state of Connecticut on the mainland, just east of New York City.
2. Rolls-Royce: a very expensive and luxurious British automobile.

female guests were too young to know one from another.

By seven o'clock the orchestra has arrived, no thin five-piece affair, but a whole pitful of oboes and trombones and saxophones and viols and cornets and piccolos, and low and high drums. The last swimmers have come in from the beach now and are dressing up-stairs; the cars from New York are parked five deep in the drive, and already the halls and salons and verandas are gaudy with primary colors, and hair shorn in strange new ways, and shawls beyond the dreams of Castile.[3] The bar is in full swing, and floating rounds of cocktails permeate the garden outside, until the air is alive with chatter and laughter, and casual innuendo and introductions forgotten on the spot, and enthusiastic meetings between women who never knew each other's names.

The lights grow brighter as the earth lurches away from the sun, and now the orchestra is playing yellow cocktail music, and the opera of voices pitches a key higher. Laughter is easier minute by minute, spilled with prodigality, tipped out at a cheerful word. The groups change more swiftly, swell with new arrivals, dissolve and form in the same breath; already there are wanderers, confident girls who weave here and there among the stouter and more stable, become for a sharp, joyous moment the center of a group, and then, excited with triumph, glide on through the sea-change of faces and voices and color under the constantly changing light.

Suddenly one of the gypsies, in trembling opal, seizes a cocktail out of the air, dumps it down for courage and, moving her hands like Frisco,[4] dances out alone on the canvas platform. A momentary hush; the orchestra leader varies his rhythm obligingly for her, and there is a burst of chatter as the erroneous news goes around that she is Gilda Gray's understudy from the *Follies*.[5] The party has begun.

I believe that on the first night I went to Gatsby's house I was one of the few guests who had actually been invited. People were not invited—they went there. They got into automobiles which bore them out to Long Island, and somehow they ended up at Gatsby's door. Once there they were introduced by somebody who knew Gatsby, and after that they conducted themselves according to the rules of behavior associated with an amusement park. Sometimes they came and went without having met Gatsby at all, came for the party with a simplicity of heart that was its own ticket of admission.

I had been actually invited. A chauffeur in a uniform of robin's-egg blue crossed my lawn early that Saturday morning with a surprisingly formal note from his employer: the honor would be entirely Gatsby's, it said, if I would attend his "little party" that night. He had seen me several times, and had intended to call on me long before, but a peculiar combination of circumstances had prevented it—signed Jay Gatsby, in a majestic hand.

Dressed up in white flannels[6] I went over to his lawn a little after seven, and wandered around rather ill at ease among swirls and eddies of people I didn't know—though here and there was a face I

3. Castile: a region of Spain, once an independent kingdom, renowned for its lace and embroidered shawls.

4. Frisco: short for San Francisco; here, a slang term meaning rapidly, vigorously.

5. the Follies: the Ziegfeld Follies, a musical theatrical revue produced by Florenz Ziegfeld, very popular in the 1920s. Gilda Gray was one of its famous stars.

6. white flannels: casual men's trousers of the 1920s made of wool flannel.

had noticed on the commuting train. I was immediately struck by the number of young Englishmen dotted about; all well dressed, all looking a little hungry, and all talking in low, earnest voices to solid and prosperous Americans. I was sure that they were selling something: bonds or insurance or automobiles. They were at least agonizingly aware of the easy money in the vicinity and convinced that it was theirs for a few words in the right key.

As soon as I arrived I made an attempt to find my host, but the two or three people of whom I asked his where-abouts stared at me in such an amazed way, and denied so vehemently any knowledge of his movements, that I slunk off in the direction of the cocktail table—the only place in the garden where a single man could linger without looking purposeless and alone.

I was on my way to get roaring drunk from sheer embarrassment when Jordan Baker came out of the house and stood at the head of the marble steps, leaning a little backward and looking with contemptuous interest down into the garden.

Welcome or not, I found it necessary to attach myself to someone before I should begin to address cordial remarks to the passers-by.

"Hello!" I roared, advancing toward her. My voice seemed unnaturally loud across the garden.

"I thought you might be here," she responded absently as I came up. "I remembered you lived next door to—"

She held my hand impersonally, as a promise that she'd take care of me in a minute, and gave ear to two girls in twin yellow dresses, who stopped at the foot of the steps.

"Hello!" they cried together. "Sorry you didn't win."

That was for the golf tournament. She had lost in the finals the week before.

"You don't know who we are," said one of the girls in yellow, "but we met you here about a month ago."

"You've dyed your hair since then," remarked Jordan, and I started, but the girls had moved casually on and her remark was addressed to the premature moon, produced like the supper, no doubt, out of a caterer's basket. With Jordan's slender golden arm resting in mine, we descended the steps and sauntered about the garden. A tray of cocktails floated at us through the twilight, and we sat down at a table with the two girls in yellow and three men, each one introduced to us as Mr. Mumble.

"Do you come to these parties often?" inquired Jordan of the girl beside her.

"The last one was the one I met you at," answered the girl, in an alert confident voice. She turned to her companion: "Wasn't it for you, Lucille?"

It was for Lucille, too.

"I like to come," Lucille said. "I never care what I do, so I always have a good time. When I was here last I tore my gown on a chair, and he asked me my name and address—inside of a week I got a package from Croirier's with a new evening gown in it."

"Did you keep it?" asked Jordan.

"Sure I did. I was going to wear it tonight, but it was too big in the bust and had to be altered. It was gas blue with lavender beads. Two hundred and sixty-five dollars."

"There's something funny about a fellow that'll do a thing like that," said the other girl eagerly. "He doesn't want any trouble with *any*body."

"Who doesn't?" I inquired.

"Gatsby. Somebody told me—"

The two girls and Jordan leaned together confidentially.

"Somebody told me they thought he killed a man once."

SELECTION I

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the narrator's attitude toward Gatsby's summer parties?
2. What are the signs of wealth at the party?
3. What mood is the author trying to establish?
4. What kind of person do you imagine Gatsby to be? the narrator?
5. The host, Gatsby, is not immediately in evidence. Does this fact contribute to the effect the author is trying to create? Explain your answer.
6. What attitudes do the guests seem to have toward their host?
7. Fitzgerald alludes to yellow cocktail music and the two anonymous girls he mentions are in yellow. Does this suggest to you any purpose on Fitzgerald's part?

SELECTION II

From The Great Gatsby

Chapter III (continued)

A thrill passed over all of us. The three Mr. Mumbles bent forward and listened eagerly.

"I don't think it's so much *that*," argued Lucille sceptically; "it's more that he was a German spy during the war."

One of the men nodded in confirmation.

"I heard that from a man who knew all about him, grew up with him in Germany," he assured us positively.

"Oh, no," said the first girl, "it couldn't be that, because he was in the American army during the war." As our credulity switched back to her she leaned forward with enthusiasm. "You look at him sometimes when he thinks nobody's looking at him. I'll bet he killed a man."

She narrowed her eyes and shivered. Lucille shivered. We all turned and looked around for Gatsby. It was testimony to the romantic speculation he inspired that there were whispers about him from those who had found little that it was necessary to whisper about in this world.

The first supper—there would be another one after midnight—was now being served, and Jordan invited me to join her own party, who were spread around a table on the other side of the garden. There were three married couples and Jordan's escort, a persistent undergraduate given to violent innuendo, and obviously under the impression that sooner or later Jordan was going to yield him up her person to a greater or lesser degree. Instead of rambling, this party had preserved a dignified homogeneity, and assumed to itself the function of representing the staid nobility of the country-side. —East Egg condescending to West Egg, and carefully on guard against its spectroscopic gayety.

"Let's get out," whispered Jordan, after a somehow wasteful and inappropriate half-hour; "this is much too polite for me."

We got up, and she explained that we were going to find the host: I had never met him, she said, and it was making me uneasy. The undergraduate nodded in a cynical, melancholy way.

The bar, where we glanced first, was crowded, but Gatsby was not there. She

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couldn't find him from the top of the steps, and he wasn't on the veranda. On a chance we tried an important-looking door, and walked into a high Gothic[1] library, panelled with carved English oak, and probably transported complete from some ruin overseas.

A stout, middle-aged man, with enormous owl-eyed spectacles, was sitting somewhat drunk on the edge of a great table, staring with unsteady concentration at the shelves of books. As we entered he wheeled excitedly around and examined Jordan from head to foot.

"What do you think?" he demanded impetuously.

"About what?"

He waved his hand toward the bookshelves.

"About that. As a matter of fact you needn't bother to ascertain. I ascertained. They're real."

"The books?"

He nodded.

"Absolutely real—have pages and everything. I thought they'd be a nice durable cardboard. Matter of fact, they're absolutely real. Pages and—Here! Lemme show you."

Taking our scepticism for granted, he rushed to the book-cases and returned with Volume One of the "Stoddard Lectures."

"See!" he cried triumphantly. "It's a bona-fide piece of printed matter. It fooled me. This fella's a regular Belasco.[2] It's a triumph. What thoroughness! What realism! Knew when to stop, too—didn't cut the pages. But what do you want? What do you expect?"

He snatched the book from me and replaced it hastily on its shelf, muttering that if one brick was removed the whole library was liable to collapse.

"Who brought you?" he demanded. "Or did you just come? I was brought. Most people were brought."

Jordan looked at him alertly, cheerfully, without answering.

"I was brought by a woman named Roosevelt," he continued. "Mrs. Claude Roosevelt. Do you know her? I met her somewhere last night. I've been drunk for about a week now, and I thought it might sober me up to sit in a library."

"Has it?"

"A little bit, I think. I can't tell yet. I've only been here an hour. Did I tell you about the books? They're real. They're—"

"You told us."

We shook hands with him gravely and went back outdoors.

There was dancing now on the canvas in the garden; old men pushing young girls backward in eternal graceless circles, superior couples holding each other tortuously, fashionably, and keeping in the corners—and a great number of single girls dancing individualistically or relieving the orchestra for a moment of the burden of the banjo or the traps.[3] By midnight the hilarity had increased. A celebrated tenor had sung in Italian, and a notorious contralto had sung in jazz, and between the numbers people were doing "stunts" all over the garden, while happy, vacuous bursts of laughter rose toward the summer sky. A pair of stage twins, who turned out

1. Gothic—a style of architecture which originated in France in the 12th century, characterized by great height in the buildings, pointed arches, rib vaulting and large window spaces.

2. Belasco—David Belasco, 1853-1931, American theatrical producer, manager and writer, known for his minutely detailed and spectacular stage settings.

3. traps: percussion instruments.

to be the girls in yellow, did a baby act in costume, and champagne was served in glasses bigger than finger-bowls. The moon had risen higher, and floating in the Sound was a triangle of silver scales, trembling a little to the stiff, tinny drip of the banjoes on the lawn.

I was still with Jordan Baker. We were sitting at a table with a man of about my age and a rowdy little girl, who gave way upon the slightest provocation to uncontrollable laughter. I was enjoying myself now. I had taken two finger-bowls of champagne, and the scene had changed before my eyes into something significant, elemental, and profound.

At a lull in the entertainment the man looked at me and smiled.

"Your face is familiar," he said, politely. "Weren't you in the Third Division during the war?"

"Why, yes. I was in the ninth machine-gun battalion."

"I was in the Seventh Infantry until June nineteen-eighteen. I knew I'd seen you somewhere before."

We talked for a moment about some wet, gray little villages in France. Evidently he lived in this vicinity, for he told me that he had just bought a hydroplane, and was going to try it out in the morning.

"Want to go with me, old sport? Just near the shore along the Sound."

"What time?"

"Any time that suits you best."

It was on the tip of my tongue to ask his name when Jordan looked around and smiled.

"Having a gay time now?" she inquired.

"Much better." I turned again to my new acquaintance. "This is an unusual party for me. I haven't even seen the host. I live over there—" I waved my hand at the invisible hedge in the distance, "and this man Gatsby sent over his chauffeur with an invitation."

For a moment he looked at me as if he failed to understand.

"I'm Gatsby," he said suddenly.

"What!" I exclaimed. "Oh, I beg your pardon."

"I thought you knew, old sport. I'm afraid I'm not a very good host."

He smiled understandingly—much more than understandingly. It was one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it, that you may come across four or five times in life. It faced—or seemed to face—the whole external world for an instant, and then concentrated on *you* with an irresistible prejudice in your favor. It understood you just as far as you wanted to be understood, believed in you as you would like to believe in yourself, and assured you that it had precisely the impression of you that, at your best, you hoped to convey. Precisely at that point it vanished—and I was looking at an elegant young roughneck, a year or two over thirty, whose elaborate formality of speech just missed being absurd. Some time before he introduced himself I'd got a strong impression that he was picking his words with care.

Almost at the moment when Mr. Gatsby identified himself, a butler hurried toward him with the information that Chicago was calling him on the wire. He excused himself with a small bow that included each of us in turn.

"If you want anything just ask for it, old sport," he urged me. "Excuse me. I will rejoin you later." . . .

SELECTION II

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does the narrator look for Gatsby?
2. What are some of the signs that the author views the party ironically?
3. What impression does Gatsby make on the narrator? Was Gatsby what you expected him to be? Why or why not?
4. What is the role of Jordan Baker in this excerpt?
5. What is the significance of the scene in the library?
6. Write a short essay comparing Fitzgerald's theme and style with those of a writer of your national literature from the era of the 1920s or some other particularly interesting period in your history.

CHAPTER XXVII

JOHN STEINBECK

JOHN STEINBECK (1902-1968)

A writer must declare and praise man's proven capacity for greatness of heart and spirit—for bravery in defeat, for courage, forgiveness, and love. I believe that a writer who does not passionately believe in man's ability to improve himself has no devotion for nor any membership in, literature.

—from his *Grapes of Wrath*

. . . .

Man, unlike any other thing organic or inorganic in the universe, grows beyond his work, walks up the stairs of his concepts, emerges ahead of his accomplishments.

—from his *Grapes of Wrath*

Steinbeck (1902-1968) did not start his literary career until Lewis and Fitzgerald had reached their peak. He seemed to be from a different world—the world of the Great Depression, the world of mass poverty. It was a world as far removed from that of Lewis as from that of Fitzgerald.

A Californian, Steinbeck was an athlete and president of his high school class, who went to Stanford University in between various jobs. He learned to know the poor, in particular the migrant farm workers, American and Mexican, and he wrote from their point of view. By the middle 1930s, when Lewis and Fitzgerald were past their writing prime, Steinbeck had authored some very popular novels. *Tortilla Flat* was a humorous story about a Mexican-American colony in Monterey, while *In Dubious Battle* was a serious work about a strike by migrant farmworkers. *Of Mice and Men* is a touching and perennially popular tale of two migrants and their mutual dependence and shared dreams. Steinbeck portrayed their odd friendship with great sympathy and understanding, and the work has been made into an equally successful play and movie.

His greatest success came in 1939 with *The Grapes of Wrath*. This is the saga of a family of Oklahoma farmers named Joad, who are driven by drought to migrate to California. There they are scornfully called "Okies" and suffer mistreatment and exploitation. Yet somehow Ma Joad always manages to hold the family together. The book leaves the reader with the feeling which Steinbeck wanted to instill—that the poor can endure by helping one another, and perhaps also that they can expect no help from anyone else.

The Grapes of Wrath makes a potent ap-

peal to the emotions. Highly charged emotional scenes, dramatic or pathetic, follow one another in rapid succession. Rarely does the drama turn to melodrama or the pathos to sentimentality, though the subject matter invites both kinds of treatment. One such scene is reprinted below. The central incident is simple. A migrant worker, desperately poor, stops with his two boys at a roadside lunch wagon to buy a loaf of bread. The waitress does not want to be bothered; she is waiting on a pair of truck drivers who are bound to be better customers. But she gives in, and ends by letting each boy have a bit of nickel candy for a penny. The scene is understated. Each person in it is realized as an individual human being—proud or humble, mean or generous, outgoing or introverted—though the scene is so brief. Because of Steinbeck's great talent and real admiration for dignity and human pride in adversity, we share his emotions for his characters.

Steinbeck arranges his effects around a central incident. He tells us that the action takes place beside a transcontinental highway, and fills out the scene with groups of staccato phrases which paint a picture for us like the brush strokes on an impressionistic canvas.

SELECTION I

The Grapes of Wrath

Chapter 15

. . . The transport truck, a driver and relief. How 'bout stoppin' for a cup a Java?[1] I know this dump.[2]

How's the schedule?

Oh, we're ahead!

Pull up, then. They's a ol' war horse[3] in here that's a kick.[4] Good Java, too.

The truck pulls up. Two men in khaki riding trousers, boots, short jackets, and shiny-visored military caps. Screen door—slam.

H'va, Mae!

Well, if it ain't Big Bill the Rat! When'd you get back on this run?

Week ago.

The other man puts a nickel in the phonograph, watches the disk slip free and the turntable rise up under it. Bing Crosby's[5] voice—golden. "Thanks for the memory, of sunburn at the shore—You might have been a headache, but you never were a bore—" And the truck driver sings for Mae's ears, you might have been a haddock but you never was a whore—

Mae laughs. Who's ya frien', Bill? New on this run, ain't he?

The other puts a nickel in the slot machine,[6] wins four slugs,[7] and puts them back. Walks to the counter.

Well, what's it gonna be?

Oh, cup a Java. Kinda pie ya got?

Banana cream, pineapple cream, chocolate cream—an' apple.

Make it apple. Wait— Kind is that big thick one?

Mae lifts it out and sniffs it. Banana cream.

Cut off a hunk; make it a big hunk.

Man at the slot machine says, Two all around.

1. a cup a Java: slang for a cup of coffee.
2. dump: slang for a place that is unattractive or ill-kept.
3. ol' war horse: slang, a tough, argumentative or coarse person.
4. kick: fun, exciting, stimulating (slang).
5. Bing Crosby: American singer, movie actor and comedian.
6. slot machines: a coin-operated, automatic device for gambling, competitive games, or selling goods.
7. slugs: metal disks used as coins.

Two it is. Seen any new etchin's[8] lately, Bill?

Well, here's one.

Now, you be careful front of a lady.

Oh, this ain't bad. Little kid comes in late to school. Teacher says, "Why ya late?" Kid says, "Had a take a heifer down—get 'er bred." Teacher says, "Couldn't your ol' man[9] do it?" Kid says, "Sure he could, but not as good as the bull."

Mae squeaks with laughter, harsh screeching laughter. Al, slicing onions carefully on a board, looks up and smiles, and then looks down again. Truck drivers, that's the stuff.[10] Gonna leave a quarter each for Mae. Fifteen cents for pie an' coffee an' a dime for Mae. An' they ain't tryin' to make her,[11] neither.

Sitting together on the stools, spoons sticking up out of the coffee mugs. Passing the time of day. And Al, rubbing down his griddle, listening but making no comment. Bing Crosby's voice stops. The turntable drops down and the record swings into its place in the pile. The purple light goes off. The nickel, which has caused all this mechanism to work, has caused Crosby to sing and an orchestra to play—this nickel drops from between the contact points into the box where the profits go. This nickel, unlike most money, has actually done a job of work, has been physically responsible for a reaction.

Steam spurts from the valve of the coffee urn. The compressor of the ice machine chugs softly for a time and then stops. The electric fan in the corner waves its head slowly back and forth, sweeping the room with a warm breeze. On the highway, on 66[12], the cars whiz by.

"They was a Massachusetts car stopped a while ago," said Mae.

Big Bill grasped his cup around the top so that the spoon stuck up between his first and second fingers. He drew in a snort of air with the coffee, to cool it. "You ought to be out on 66. Cars from all over the country. All headin' west. Never seen so many before. Sure some honeys[13] on the road."

"We seen a wreck this mornin'," his companion said. "Big car. Big Cad[14], a special job and a honey, low, cream color, special job. Hit a truck. Folded the radiator right back into the driver. Must a been doin' ninety. Steerin' wheel went right on through the guy an' lef' him a-wigglin' like a frog on a hook. Peach[15] of a car. A honey. You can have her for peanuts now. Drivin' alone, the guy was."

Al looked up from his work. "Hurt the truck?"

"Oh, Jesus Christ! Wasn't a truck. One of them cut-down cars full a stoves an' pans an' mattresses an' kids an' chickens. Goin' west, you know. This guy come by us doin' ninety—r'ared up[16] on two wheels just to pass us, an' a car's comin' so he cuts in an whangs[17] this here truck. Drove like he's blin' drunk.[18] Jesus, the air was full a bed clothes an' chickens an' kids. Killed one kid. Never seen such a mess. We pulled up. Ol' man that's drivin' the truck, he

8. etchin's: etchings, pictures engraved with wood or metal plates; used here as slang for pictures or jokes.
9. ol' man: old man, slang for father.
10. that's the stuff: slang expression of approval.
11. to make her: to seduce her.
12. on 66: highway 66, a major east-west route across the U.S.
13. honey: something pleasing, attractive, delightful.
14. Cad: a Cadillac, a large, expensive American automobile; symbol of wealth.
15. peach: something very attractive; similar to "honey."
16. r'ared up: slang, reared up, to rise up on the hind legs, as a horse.
17. whang: slang, to hit, strike violently.
18. blin' drunk: blind drunk, intoxicated to the point of not being able to see clearly.

jus' stan's there lookin' at that dead kid. Can't get a word out of 'im. Jus' rum-dumb.[19] God Almighty; the road is full a them families goin' west. Never seen so many. Gets worse all a time. Wonder where the hell they all come from?"

"Wonder where they all go to," said Mae. "Come here for gas sometimes, but they don't hardly never buy nothin' else. People says they steal. We ain't got nothin' lavin' around. They never stole nothin' from us."

Big Bill, munching his pie, looked up the road through the screened window. "Better tie your stuff down. I think you got some of 'em comin' now."

19. rum-dumb: slang, not saying a word

SELECTION I

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does Steinbeck leave out some explanatory material? Why does he make use of incomplete sentences?
2. What kind of person is Mae? Al? What device does Steinbeck use to portray these characters?
3. Is this wayside restaurant (diner) similar to any place where you have eaten?
4. What is the author's purpose in describing the automobile wreck?
5. What feeling does Steinbeck want the reader to have toward the truck drivers?
6. How does the author create an atmosphere of camaraderie in the restaurant scene?
7. What is the attitude of the truck drivers and Mae toward the families traveling west?
8. There are a number of examples of substandard English in the speech of the different characters. Make a list of 8-10 samples and then give the correct grammatical form.

SELECTION II

The Grapes of Wrath

Chapter 15 (continued)

A 1926 Nash[1] sedan pulled wearily off the highway. The back seat was piled nearly to the ceiling with sacks, with pots and pans, and on the very top, right up against the ceiling, two boys rode. On the top of the car, a mattress and a folded tent; tent poles tied along the running board. The car pulled up to the gas pumps. A dark-haired, hatchet-faced man got slowly out. And the two boys slid down from the load and hit the ground.

Mae walked around the counter and stood in the door. The man was dressed in gray wool trousers and a blue shirt, dark blue with sweat on the back and under the arms. The boys in overalls and nothing else, ragged patched overalls. Their hair was light, and it stood up evenly all over their heads, for it had been roached.[2] Their faces were streaked with dust. They

1. Nash: an American-made automobile.

2. roached: trimmed and brushed upward.

went directly to the mud puddle under the hose and dug their toes into the mud.

The man asked, "Can we git some water, ma'am?"

A look of annoyance crossed Mae's face. "Sure, go ahead." She said softly over her shoulder, "I'll keep my eye on the hose." She watched while the man slowly unscrewed the radiator cap and ran the hose in.

A woman in the car, a flaxen-haired woman, said, "See if you can't git it here."

The man turned off the hose and screwed on the cap again. The little boys took the hose from him and they upended it and drank thirstily. The man took off his dark, stained hat and stood with a curious humility in front of the screen. "Could you see your way to sell us a loaf of bread, ma'am?"

Mae said, "This ain't a grocery store. We got bread to make san'widges."

"I know, ma'am." His humility was insistent. "We need bread and there ain't nothin' for quite a piece,[3] they say."

"If we sell bread we gonna run out." Mae's tone was faltering.

"We're hungry," the man said.

"Why'n't you buy a san'widge? We got nice san'widges, hamburgs."

"We'd sure admire[4] to do that, ma'am. But we can't. We got to make a dime do all of us." And he said embarrassedly, "We ain't got but a little."

Mae said, "You can't get no loaf a bread for a dime. We only got fifteen-cent loafs."

From behind her Al growled, "God Almighty, Mae, give 'em bread."

"We'll run out 'fore the bread truck comes."

"Run out, then, goddamn it," said Al. And he looked sullenly down at the potato salad he was mixing.

Mae shrugged her plump shoulders and looked to the truck drivers to show them what she was up against.

She held the screen door open and the man came in, bringing a smell of sweat with him. The boys edged in behind him and they went immediately to the candy case and stared in—not with craving or with hope or even with desire, but with a kind of wonder that such things could be. They were alike in size and their faces were alike. One scratched his dusty ankle with the toe nails of his other foot. The other whispered some soft message and then they straightened their arms so that their clenched fists in the overall pockets showed through the thin blue cloth.

Mae opened a drawer and took out a long waxpaperwrappered loaf. "This here is a fifteen-cent loaf."

The man put his hat back on his head. He answered with inflexible humility, "Won't you—can't you see your way to cut off ten cents' worth?"

Al said snarlingly, "Goddamn it, Mae. Give 'em the loaf."

The man turned toward Al. "No, we want ta buy ten cents' worth of it. We got it figgered[5] awful close, mister, to get to California."

Mae said resignedly, "You can have this for ten cents."

"That's be robbin' you, ma'am."

"Go ahead—Al says to take it." She pushed the waxpapered loaf across the counter. The man took a deep leather pouch from his rear pocket, untied the strings, and spread it open. It was heavy with silver and with greasy bills.

"May soun' funny to be so tight," he

3. for quite a piece: for some distance; for a long way
4. we'd sure admire: colloquial for we'd like
5. figgered: figured; calculated

apologized. "We got a thousan' miles to go, an' we don' know if we'll make it." He dug in the pouch with a forefinger, located a dime, and pinched in for it. When he put it down on the counter he had a penny with it. He was about to drop the penny back into the pouch when his eye fell on the boys frozen before the candy counter. He moved slowly down to them. He pointed in the case at big long sticks of striped peppermint. "Is them penny candy, ma'am?"

Mae moved down and looked in. "Which ones?"

"There, them strips ones."

The little boys raised their eyes to her face and they stopped breathing; their mouths were partly opened, their half-naked bodies were rigid.

"Oh—them. Well, no—them's two for a penny."

"Well, gimme two then, ma'am." He placed the copper cent carefully on the counter. The boys expelled their held breath softly. Mae held the big sticks out.

"Take 'em," said the man.

They reached timidly, each took a stick, and they held them down at their sides and did not look at them. But they looked at each other, and their mouth corners smiled rigidly with embarrassment.

"Thank you, ma'am." The man picked up the bread and went out the door, and the little boys marched stiffly behind him, the red-striped sticks held tightly against their legs. They leaped like chipmunks over the front seat and onto the top of the load, and they burrowed back out of sight like chipmunks.

The man got in and started his car, and with a roaring motor and a cloud of blue oily smoke the ancient Nash climbed up on the highway and went on its way to the west.

From inside the restaurant the truck drivers and Mae and Al stared after them.

Big Bill wheeled back. "Them wasn't two-for-a-cent candy," he said.

"What's that to you?" Mae said fiercely.

"Them was nickel apiece candy," said Bill.

"We got to get goin'," said the other man. "We're dropping time." They reached in their pockets. Bill put a coin on the counter and the other man looked at it and reached again and put down a coin. They swung around and walked to the door.

"So long," said Bill.

Mae called, "Hey! Wait a minute. You got change."

"You go to hell," said Bill, and the screen door slammed.

Mae watched them get into the great truck, watched it lumber off in low gear, and heard the shift up the whining gears to cruising ratio. "Al—" she said softly.

He looked up from the hamburger he was patting thin and stacking between waxed papers. "What ya want?"

"Look there." She pointed at the coins beside the cups—two half-dollars. Al walked near and looked, and then he went back to his work.

"Truck drivers," Mae said reverently. . .

SELECTION II

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe the man who wants to buy bread.
2. How would you characterize the two boys? What is the significance of the candy scene?
3. What is Mae's attitude toward the man? In what way does it change? Why?
4. With what feelings does the end of this episode leave you? Do you think better or worse of human nature? Explain your answer.
5. Is your reaction to the family predominantly one of pity or of admiration? What is the cause for each? How would Sandburg have looked at this family?
6. Can you relate instances of stereotyped attitudes being changed by actual contact between individuals?
7. How does Steinbeck's style add to the drama of the restaurant scene?
8. Does this story remind you of other migrations in history—of episodes in your own national history, for example? How would you compare them to the situation described in *Grapes of Wrath*?

Although important events often reflect themselves quickly in the literature of a country, the effect of World War I on American writing was delayed. The war promptly produced some mediocre prose and poetry, but distinguished work—mainly in the form of novels—appeared only some years later. The best came from Ernest Hemingway. He had already written some very good short stories and one first-class novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, but he did not publish a novel fully involved with the war till 1929. It proved worth waiting for.

A Farewell to Arms, the moving story of the love affair of a wounded American lieutenant and an English nurse, is outstanding among literary works related to World War I. Hemingway had served with an ambulance group in France and then transferred to the Italian infantry, where he stayed till the close of the war. In this novel his two characters pass an idyllic Italian summer together. She becomes pregnant, and they go to Switzerland where she has her baby. But both she and the baby die, and the American is left desolate. The war plays a principal part in the book. The American has taken part in combat and in the disastrous withdrawal of the Italian army after an overwhelming defeat. Because of his aversion to the cruelties of World War I Hemingway made a cult of the courage necessary to survive such an ordeal.

The onset of the Great Depression, on the other hand, was rapidly mirrored in American literature, especially in novels, and during the ten years after the Depression started, much writing dealt with it. One of the best of these novels was John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. But the arrival of the Depression little affected Hemingway's attitudes. During the 1930s, he continued to publish novels and short stories. They dealt with a variety of subjects but customarily revealed his high view of courage. The brave did not always survive in his fiction but they lived their lives to the fullest. It was not till the late 1930s that reference to the Depression crept into Hemingway's writing and, even then, its influence was indirect. It did not come in the form of an attack on poverty or joblessness but in a new interest in collective political action. He believed in a great alliance of liberals to fight the battles of both peace and war. When the Spanish civil war began in 1936, he traveled to Spain to report on it and write about it. When it was over, he published a notable novel, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. It is a war novel containing the message that all liberals must help one another, must act collectively, if good is to endure, but it is also a love story of great appeal.

In spite of the significance of war for him, Hemingway never projected a mindless combativeness. He knew the suffering that war could bring, a suffering invariably compounded by the tragedies it inflicted on civilian life. Nowhere does he show this better than in the short story, "In Another Country", included in this book.

William Faulkner, too, knew the dislocations as well as the injuries that war could cause. During World War I, he trained with the British Royal Air Force in Canada but the war ended before he could go overseas. Nevertheless, on returning to Mississippi, where his family had long lived, he recognized that the wounds of war were not only physical. He felt a sense of alienation from his Southern surroundings, which he showed in a novel called *Soldier's Pay*, published in 1926, and in a far better one, *Sartoris*, published three years later. In the latter work, the hero comes back home after the war but cannot settle down. He is tied to his Mississippi town, yet he is now cut off from it. Death is the only solution for his problem. It comes when he recklessly flies an airplane of unusual design, which crashes.

Still, Faulkner himself gradually felt a closer identification with his sorroundings. He realized he was part of them, and could not escape them. So he wrote more and more about his home, creating a Mississippi community modeled on his own county. In it he put the characters he observed, using brilliant and complicated literary techniques to tell their stories. Though his characters

lived in a single Southern county, he made this county represent a world. His appeal became universal, as well as particular. Faulkner wrote of conflicts: the conflict of generations, old and young; of economic classes, rich, would-be rich, and poor; of races, white and black; of men, good and bad; and of the good and evil in man himself. His philosophy was that in the long run the brotherhood of man would triumph. His books made him world-famous and won him the Nobel Prize in 1950.

During the first part of the 20th century, the novel continued to reign as the nation's chief literary form. Nevertheless, serious poetry continued to be written. The most widely accepted date for marking a poetic renaissance in the United States and the beginning of modern American poetry is 1912, the year *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* was founded by Harriet Monroe and a group of subscribers. The first issue of the magazine stated its purpose: "to give to poetry her own place, her own voice." From its founding down to the present, the magazine has served its function admirably well and has been instrumental in introducing many new American poets to the poetry-reading public.

A common attitude among the new poets of the interwar years was one of rebellion against Victorian poetry, a rebellion which was often manifested in their reactions against Victorian philosophy. More often, however, rather than rebelling against what the Victorian poets had said, the typical new poet reacted against how they had expressed themselves. He was against the conventional poetic techniques of the times.

Experimentation was common. Robert Frost observed that "Poetry ... was tried without punctuation. It was tried without capital letters. It was tried without any image but those to the eye. ... It was tried without content under the name of poesie pure. It was tried without phrase, epigram, coherence, logic, and consistency. It was tried without ability. ... It was tried without feeling or sentiment."

The new poets felt that life was more complicated than most Romantic poets had admitted, and they set about to expose its conflicts and contrasting value systems. Consequently, most of these interwar poets dealt with the incongruities of existence and resorted to such devices as humor, irony, and wit to point up the multiple aspects of life.

Taking their cue from the Imagists[1] of the early 20th century, American poets between the two World Wars believed that poetry should treat its subject directly, without much moralizing or added commentary; that only words which strengthened the poem should be used; and that rhythm should arise from longer phrases which approximated speech. They also avoided sentimentality and used a kind of understated or indirect approach, expecting the reader to discover the meaning for himself.

In contrast to the poetry of the 19th century, the new American poetry was both more intellectual and more related to real life situations. Another characteristic was its attempt to employ the most concentrated expression possible by eliminating all but the essential images.

During the early years of the 20th-century poetic rebellion, an important battle was fought for the recognition of free verse. For many years, the casual reader believed that the "new poetry" and "free verse" were synonymous. Among the writers of such verse, in the tradition of Walt Whitman, were William Carlos Williams, Carl Sandburg, and Wallace Stevens.

Gradually free verse won acceptance, but after a period during which it was used increasingly, it began to decline in popularity. By 1941 many leading poets considered it rather old-fashioned. Nevertheless, free verse had important effects, for it offered new insights about possible variations in verse forms. Even so "classical" a poet as Robert Frost was not immune to such influences toward freedom of versification.

Since the start of World War I in Europe, Frost had been publishing small collections of his verse. Though the first important recognition he received came from Britain, he was always essentially a New England poet. He was also a farmer, writing his poetry with the deceptive, rustic simplicity we associate with country life. He wrote about building

1. Imagists: adherents of a school of poetry in England and the U.S. which flourished from 1909 to 1917.

fences, picking apples, gathering flowers, sowing and harvesting. He wrote about the universal matters of life and death, good and evil, just as Faulkner did in his novels. The two World Wars and the Great Depression between them had little effect on his verse. National and international events left it unruffled. In both emotion and language, Frost was restrained, conveying his message by implication. The rhythms of his poetry were regular. They were not glibly smooth, but they fell easily on the ear. Though his language started out by being conventionally poetic, he soon found his individual voice. His poetry then gained a colloquial directness that allowed him to avoid the extremes of high-sounding phrases on the one hand and banality on the other.

For all his seeming serenity, Frost knew what sorrow and wickedness meant. As he said in one lyric, he was acquainted with the night. More than a handful of his poems reflect the tragedies that darkened his personal life. As he went on writing, he increased in wisdom. His poetic gifts never failed him, although he lived to be nearly ninety. His final book was issued in 1962.

Robert Frost, Carl Sandburg, and Edward Arlington Robinson, along with other distinctively modern poets, had succeeded in accustoming readers to verse forms that embraced all types, from rhymed stanzas in regular meter to free verse. They had caught the authentic rhythms and accents of 20th-century America. *Poetry* magazine also was furnishing a market for experimental verse. Within this atmosphere, the poetry of such new voices as those of William Carlos Williams, Langston Hughes, and Archibald MacLeish, was gradually accepted. This new group, many of whom were only a few years younger than the poets who had received recognition before World War I, grew in fame as the years passed. By the outbreak of World War II, they formed the nucleus of a goodly number of truly excellent modern poets.

In many ways, however, the first half of the 20th century was still an age of prose. The most notable writing continued to be fiction, as novelists competed for public attention. Writers like John Dos Passos, Willa Cather, and Thomas Wolfe were widely acclaimed. And one author, writing with a minimum of concessions to the critics and to the public, began to attract the attention of serious students of literature. She was a Southerner, Katherine Anne Porter.

Miss Porter grew up in Texas and lived for a time in Mexico. She used both places as the settings for some of her rich, involved stories. She gathered her early tales in a book called *Flowering Judas*. Later collections of her works also proved to be distinguished. The best of them was *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*. The title story tells about a girl's love for a soldier who dies of influenza in camp during World War I. It is a remarkably appealing tale told in a style that is elegant but with a cutting edge. Much of the critical acclaim for this work resulted from Miss Porter's skillful use of symbols in it.

Some of her stories show Miss Porter's interest in the tensions between two cultures, in particular between the Mexican and the American, and between the Negro and the White. The short story, "Theft,"—unusually short for her—is a brilliant combination of clashes. It encompasses the encounters of races, nations, and sexes. The same talent for simultaneously treating several conflicts appears in her one long work, the novel entitled *Ship of Fools*. She pictures a German ship going from Mexico to Europe shortly before the beginning of the Nazi regime. The individual passengers represent various groups. Hostility and tension fill the sea air. Nearly everyone on board suffers from it. The voyage is a long one, and revealing because of Miss Porter's insight into human nature. It is a happy one for only a scattered few among the many passengers.

There is a sharp contrast between the steely, if feminine, strength of Miss Porter's writing in *Ship of Fools* and the fluid writing of Saul Bellow in *The Adventures of Augie March*. Bellow was a Canadian boy who migrated with his family to the United States in 1924. He grew up in Chicago and went to college there. He gradually displayed his gift for writing prose fiction and gained critical praise. His first two novels were conventional and tight in structure. *Dangling Man* (1944) is the diary of a draftee of Bellow's own age, waiting to be inducted into the army and meanwhile living in indecisive uncertainty. At times he tries to arouse himself but he always

slips back into a state of inertia. At the end he welcomes being drafted because it means that he will have no decisions to make. The next novel, *The Victim*, is set in New York in the heat of summer. It deals with a worried businessman and an acquaintance who fastens onto him like a leech. The acquaintance lives off the businessman and harries him. As the novel goes along, we become less sure which man is being victimized, and which is the victim.

These first two Bellow novels showed good organization, but his *Augie March* sprawls. The main connection between the many episodes of this long book, published in 1953, is simply the central character. He is talkative, goodhearted, sometimes a bit of a rascal. This kind of novel is called "picaresque," after a Spanish word for "rogue." The setting is Chicago, which is pictured as a city full of vitality. Augie knocks on many doors, there and elsewhere, and they usually open for him.

Bellow has gone on to publish several more novels. Taken together, they establish his rank among today's leading American novelists. Among his more recent novels it is hard to pick out the best; each is good. However, the most noteworthy is probably *Herzog*, the story of a neurotic, alienated college professor. In a sense, the alienated man is still Bellow's favorite hero. After all, for many years Bellow saw himself as an outsider. He was a Canadian who came to the United States. He was a Midwesterner in a culture dominated by the eastern part of the country. He was a Jew in a gentile civilization. Like most authors, he usually put himself into his books.

Bellow is the best, but not the only, Jewish novelist who has turned his feeling of alienation into first-class fiction. In today's culture one of the most appealing symbols of alienation has been the Jew. Only one symbol has been more effective. It is that of the Negro.

The Negro writer provides the most striking example of alienation in American literature. With the emergence of the Black Power[2] movement and the drive for a separate—and black—identity, he has come to the forefront. There has been a spate of Negro novels. Their general subject has been the oppression by the whites of a Negro minority. Their usual vehicle has been the story, generally set in a black ghetto, of a Negro youth and the cruel things that happen to him. The first notable example, *Native Son* by Richard Wright, appeared in 1940. After World War II more such novels appeared, especially in the late 1950s and 1960s. Since 1965 a significant number of new black poets and essayists have appeared.

The most gifted of black novelists, James Baldwin, has not written exclusively about his race, however. His alienated heroes have been white, as well as black. His first novel was *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, published in 1953. It is about the members of a Harlem[3] church and, through flash-backs, about their ancestors. His second novel, *Giovanni's Room*, is about Whites. His later fiction and his essays explain pungently what it means to be a Negro. The essays also describe the dangers of ignoring the Negro's plight in American culture.

Talented though Baldwin is, his writing has been overshadowed by a single novel, *Invisible Man*, written by Ralph Ellison and published in 1952. This is considered by many critics to be the outstanding book of the past twenty years. The "invisible man" is the Negro. The white man simply does not see him as a human being; that is Ellison's central idea. He dramatizes this idea through the experience of a young man—basically Ellison himself—who attends a Negro college, is expelled through no fault of his own, and finally drifts to Harlem. There he assumes the leadership, by chance, in a struggle against a family's eviction. He attracts the attention of the local Communist party, joins it, but at length rebels against its discipline, which is as unacceptable to him as the Black Nationalism[4] he also encounters. At the end of

2 Black Power: a movement among American Negroes aimed at gaining social equality with whites by uniting Negro institutions politically and culturally, instead of working for integration into the white community.

3 Harlem: section of New York City occupied principally by Negroes.

4 Black Nationalism: a movement, supported by some American Negroes, which proposes the separation and segregation of Negroes from whites with a view to establishing a new black nation.

the story he withdraws completely from society, living in a sealed cellar.

The novel is written in a vivid, flexible style. Its characters are types, and yet they seem to move and have a life of their own. The gallery of whites and Negroes in Ellison's book includes a number of characters we are apt to remember, especially the main character himself and the Black Nationalist who calls himself Ras the Exhorter. The message of the novel is despair, but Ellison's energy is so brilliant that he makes us hopeful in spite of his own pessimism. In a way, Ellison's notable novel sums up American literature of today. It is energized by dissent and alienation.

After World War II, American poetry began to turn away from the orthodoxy—based on symmetry, intellect, irony, and wit—that had been established by T. S. Eliot and the new critics. The later poets discovered that they needed something more than the standardized intellectual, ironic, impersonal approaches of the previous thirty years. Seeking to communicate their experience, these poets (of whom Randall Jarrell is one example) expressed themselves with the emotional and the personal, in poetry of feeling and insight; they insisted on looking at World War II with their own eyes and telling its meaning with their own voices.

At the same time, new poetic elements began to emerge. Other poets added their contributions to the rather quiet and unassuming character that American poetry seemed to have adopted. William Carlos Williams made effective use of colloquial speech. Robert Lowell examined the alienation of self. Theodore Roethke (as well as Lowell) focused on the suburbs as a possible place of quiet despair. In contrast to the negativism of alienation of self, Roethke gave poetic expression to an inward joy and a kind of poetic defiance to the terrors of modern life, and many poets found inspiration in ordinary, everyday experience rather than in some unusual happening or encounter.

Two characteristic strains that run through much of contemporary American poetry are introspection and social criticism. These two themes are frequently combined into what we may call introspective social criticism, in which the poet explores the depths of his own feelings with regard to what appear to him to be the injustices of the society that victimizes his environment.

Sincerity and a fascination with opposition are among the most representative themes of the contemporary writer. These can be reflected in the poet's treatment, as well as in his choice, of subject matter. An intense awareness of the differences between appearance and fact, seeming and being, the superficial and the essential, is accompanied by a bold, sometimes daring use of oppositions and unexpected juxtapositions in form.

In his striving to cut through appearances to strip away all but the bare truth, to avoid all that is not "absolutely true," the contemporary poet has established a sense of honesty and protest against hypocrisy as one of his guiding principles. These principles are expressed in different ways according to each poet's temperament and manner of expression, from the raucous invective, the blunt, prosaic, strident manner commonly associated with literature of protest, to the most subtle, sensitive, oblique poetic metaphor. Indirectness is, in fact, an important characteristic differentiating contemporary poetry from the poetry that preceded it. While the words and images themselves are generally blunt, abrupt, and realistic—in keeping with contemporary attitudes and idiom—the total structure tends toward the implicit, compressed, and provocative, in contrast with the more literal and logical structure of traditional poetry. Sarcasm, irony, and paradox are the common tools of the modern poet.

Interesting and important as the themes and directions of contemporary American poetry are, they should, as with all new trends in the creative arts, be viewed more as evolutionary stirrings than as permanent achievements. Tomorrow might see poetry take a new direction, or new modes of poetic expression, existing as a deep undercurrent, might not rise to the surface until some time in the future. Only time can determine the importance and lasting quality that these contemporary contributions will make to the development of 20th-century American poetry.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ERNEST HEMINGWAY

ERNEST HEMINGWAY (1898-1961)

"A writer's problem does not change. He himself changes and the world he lives in changes but his problem remains the same. It is always how to write truly and, having found what is true, to project it in such a way that it becomes a part of the experience of the person who reads it."

—From his *Problems of Writer in War Time*

Hemingway (1898-1961) was born in Illinois. His family took him, as a boy, on frequent hunting and fishing trips and so acquainted him early with the kinds of virtues, such as courage and endurance, which were later reflected in his fiction. After high school, he worked as a newspaper reporter and then went overseas to take part in World War I. After the war he lived for several years in Paris, where he became part of a group of Americans who felt alienated from their country. They considered themselves a lost generation. It was not long before he began publishing remarkable and completely individual short stories. The year he left Paris he published the powerful novel, *The Sun Also Rises*. His subjects were often war and its effects on people, or contests, such as hunting or bullfighting, which demand stamina and courage.

Hemingway's style of writing is striking. His sentences are short, his words simple, yet they are often filled with emotion. A careful reading can show us, furthermore, that he is a master of the pause. That is, if we look closely, we see how the action of his stories continues during the silences, during the times his characters say nothing. This action is often full of meaning. There are times when the most powerful effect comes from restraint. Such times occur often in Hemingway's fiction. He perfected the art of conveying emotion with few words.

In contrast to the Romantic writer, who often emphasizes abundance and even excess, Hemingway is a Classicist in his restraint and understatement. He believes, with many other Classicists, that the strongest effect comes with an economy of means.

This is not to say that his work is either emotionless or dull. "In Another Country," the short story reprinted in the next pages, is filled with emotional overtones. Its dominant feeling is one of pity for misfortunes that can never be remedied. A hand crippled is, and will always be, a hand crippled. A beloved wife lost through death is lost indeed. Perhaps we should be resigned to such misfortunes, but the Italian major in this story laments that he cannot be resigned. The tragedies of life cannot really be remedied.

SELECTION I

In Another Country

In the fall the war was always there, but we did not go to it any more. It was cold in the fall in Milan and the dark came very early. Then the electric lights came on, and it was pleasant along the streets looking in the windows. There was much game hanging outside the shops, and the snow powdered in the fur of the foxes and the wind blew their tails. The deer hung stiff and heavy and empty, and small birds blew in the wind and the wind turned their feathers. It was a cold fall and the wind came down from the mountains.

We were all at the hospital every afternoon, and there were different ways of walking across the town through the dusk to the hospital. Two of the ways were alongside canals but they were long. Always, though, you crossed a bridge across a canal to enter the hospital. There was a choice of three bridges. On one of them a woman sold roasted chestnuts. It was warm, standing in front of her charcoal fire, and the chestnuts were warm afterward in your pocket. The hospital was very old and very beautiful, and you entered through a gate and walked across a courtyard and out a gate on the other side. There were usually funerals starting from the courtyard. Beyond the old hospital were the new brick pavilions, and there we met every afternoon and were all very polite and interested in what was the matter, and sat in the machines that were to make so much difference.

The doctor came up to the machine where I was sitting and said: "What did you like best to do before the war? Did you practice a sport?"

I said: "Yes, football."

"Good," he said. "You will be able to play football again better than ever."

My knee did not bend and the leg dropped straight from the knee to the ankle without a calf, and the machine was to bend the knee and make it move as in riding a tricycle. But it did not bend yet, and instead the machine lurched when it came to the bending part. The doctor said: "That will all pass. You are a fortunate young man. You will play football again like a champion."

In the next machine was a major who had a little hand like a baby's. He winked at me when the doctor examined his hand which was between two leather straps that bounced up and down and flapped the stiff fingers, and said: "And will I too play football, captain-doctor?" He had been a very great fencer, and before the war the greatest fencer in Italy.

The doctor went to his office in the back room and brought a photograph which showed a hand that had been withered almost as small as the major's, before it had taken a machine course, and after was a little larger. The major held the photograph with his good hand and looked at it very carefully. "A wound?" he asked.

"An industrial accident," the doctor said.

"Very interesting, very interesting," the

major said, and handed it back to the doctor.

"You have confidence?"

"No," said the major.

There were three boys who came each day who were about the same age I was. They were all three from Milan, and one of them was to be a lawyer, and one was to be a painter, and one had intended to be a soldier, and after we were finished with the machines, sometimes we walked back together to the Café Cova, which was next door to the Scala.[1] We walked the short way through the communist quarter because we were four together. The people hated us because we were officers, and from a wine-shop some one called out, "A basso gli ufficiali!"[2] as we passed. Another boy who walked with us sometimes and made us five wore a black silk handkerchief across his face because he had no nose then and his face was to be rebuilt. He had gone out to the front from the military academy and been wounded within an hour after he had gone into the front line for the first time. They rebuilt his face, but he came from a very old family and they could never get the nose exactly right. He went to South America and worked in a bank. But this was a long time ago, and then we did not any of us know how it was going to be afterward. We only knew then that there was always the war, but that we were not going to it any more.

We all had the same medals, except the boy with the black silk bandage across his face, and he had not been at the front long enough to get any medals. The tall boy with a very pale face who was to be a lawyer had been a lieutenant of Arditi[3] and had three medals of the sort we each had only one of. He had lived a very long time with death and was a little detached. We were all a little detached, and there was nothing that held us together except that we met every afternoon at the hospital. Although, as we walked to the Cova through the tough part of town, walking in the dark, with light and singing coming out of the wine-shops, and sometimes having to walk into the street when the men and women would crowd together on the sidewalk so that we would have had to jostle them to get by, we felt held together by there being something that had happened that they, the people who disliked us, did not understand.

1. Scala: La Scala is the name of the opera house in Milan, Italy.
2. "A basso gli ufficiali": "Down with officers"
3. Arditi: assault troops of the Italian Army, 1915-1918.

SELECTION I

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The wounded soldiers in the story are "in another country" in the sense of being out of combat. From what "other country," besides the war, are they separated? How is the exclusion of these soldiers from these "other countries" important to the theme of the story?

2. Not only are the soldiers shut off from the war, but they are also shut off from other groups and from each other. Cite examples from the story which illustrate this alienation.

3. Do you think the dead animals hanging outside of the shops have any symbolic meaning? Explain your answer.

4. Is it important to know the identity of the

young American soldier who is narrating the story? Why or why not?

5. How is the major different from the other wounded men?

6. Referring to the young man whose face was to be rebuilt, Hemingway says, "He had lived a very long time with death and was a little detached." What does this sentence mean to you?

7. Why do the people in the communist quarter of Milan dislike the four young men?

8. How does the doctor try to maintain the young American's morale?

9. Is it significant to know that the major had been Italy's greatest fencer? Explain your answer.

SELECTION II

In Another Country, concluded

We ourselves all understood the Cova, where it was rich and warm and not too brightly lighted, and noisy and smoky at certain hours, and there were always girls at the tables and the illustrated papers on a rack on the wall. The girls at the Cova were very patriotic, and I found that the most patriotic people in Italy were the café girls—and I believe they are still patriotic.

The boys at first were very polite about my medals and asked me what I had done to get them. I showed them the papers, which were written in a very beautiful language and full of *fratellanza*[1] and *abnegazione*[2], but which really said, with the adjectives removed, that I had been given the medals because I was an American. After that their manner changed a little toward me, although I was their friend against outsiders. I was a friend, but I was never really one of them after they had read the citations, because it had been different with them and they had done very different things to get their medals. I had been wounded, it was true; but we all knew that being wounded, after all, was really an accident. I was never ashamed of the ribbons, though, and sometimes, after the cocktail hour, I would imagine myself having done all the things they had done to get their medals; but walking home at night through the empty streets with the cold wind and all the shops closed, trying to keep near the street lights, I knew that I would never have done such things, and I was very much afraid to die, and often lay in bed at night by myself, afraid to die and wondering how I would be when I went back to the front again.

The three with the medals were like hunting-hawks; and I was not a hawk, although I might seem a hawk to those who have never hunted; they, the three, knew better and so we drifted apart. But I stayed good friends with the boy who had been wounded his first day at the front, because he would never know now how he would have turned out; so he could never be accepted either, and I liked him because I thought perhaps he would not have turned out to be a hawk either.

The major, who had been the great fencer, did not believe in bravery, and spent much time while we sat in the machines correcting my grammar. He had complimented me on how I spoke Italian, and we talked together very easily. One day I had said that Italian seemed such an easy language to me that I could not take a great interest in it; everything was so easy to say. "Ah, yes," the major said. "Why, then, do you not take up the use of grammar?" So we took up the use of

1. *fratellanza*: brotherhood.
2. *abnegazione*: renunciation, self-denial.

grammar, and soon Italian was such a different language that I was afraid to talk to him until I had the grammar straight in my mind.

The major came very regularly to the hospital. I do not think he ever missed a day, although I am sure he did not believe in the machines. There was a time when none of us believed in the machines, and one day the major said it was all nonsense. The machines were new then and it was we who were to prove them. It was an idiotic idea, he said, "a theory, like another." I had not learned my grammar, and he said I was a stupid impossible disgrace, and he was a fool to have bothered with me. He was a small man and he sat straight up in his chair with his right hand thrust into the machine and looked straight ahead at the wall while the straps thumped up and down with his fingers in them.

"What will you do when the war is over if it is over?" he asked me. "Speak grammatically!"

"I will go to the States."

"Are you married?"

"No, but I hope to be."

"The more of a fool you are," he said. He seemed very angry. "A man must not marry."

"Why, Signor Maggiore?"[3]

"Don't call me 'Signor Maggiore.'"

"Why must not a man marry?"

"He cannot marry. He cannot marry," he said angrily. "If he is to lose everything, he should not place himself in a position to lose that. He should not place himself in a position to lose. He should find things he cannot lose."

He spoke very angrily and bitterly, and looked straight ahead while he talked.

"But why should he necessarily lose it?"

"He'll lose it," the major said. He was looking at the wall. Then he looked down at the machine and jerked his little hand out from between the straps and slapped it hard against his thigh. "He'll lose it," he almost shouted. "Don't argue with me!" Then he called to the attendant who ran the machines. "Come and turn this damned thing off."

He went back into the other room for the light treatment and the massage. Then I heard him ask the doctor if he might use his telephone and he shut the door. When he came back into the room, I was sitting in another machine. He was wearing his cape and had his cap on, and he came directly toward my machine and put his arm on my shoulder.

"I am so sorry," he said, and patted me on the shoulder with his good hand. "I would not be rude. My wife has just died. You must forgive me."

"Oh—" I said, feeling sick for him. "I am *so* sorry."

He stood there biting his lower lip. "It is very difficult," he said. "I cannot resign myself."

He looked straight past me and out through the window. Then he began to cry. "I am utterly unable to resign myself," he said and choked. And then crying, his head up looking at nothing, carrying himself straight and soldierly, with tears on both his cheeks and biting his lips, he walked past the machines and out the door.

The doctor told me that the major's wife, who was very young and whom he had not married until he was definitely invalided out of the war, had died of pneumonia. She had been sick only a few days. No one expected her to die. The major did not come to the hospital for three days. Then he came at the usual hour, wearing a black band on the sleeve

3. *Signor Maggiore*: Major (military title).

of his uniform. When he came back, there were large framed photographs around the wall, of all sorts of wounds before and after they had been cured by the machines. In front of the machine the major used were three photographs of hands like his that were completely restored. I do not know where the doctor got them. I always understood we were the first to use the machines. The photographs did not make much difference to the major because he only looked out of the window.

SELECTION II

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

A. 1. Why are the narrator and the young boy who had lost his face considered outsiders by the others?

2. Do you think the narrator possesses the characteristics which Hemingway admires in a man? Explain your reasons.

3. What impressions have you formed of the young American?

4. The narrator states that the major did not believe in the machines. If this is true, why do you think he kept returning to the hospital?

5. Do you agree that the principal drama of the story is found in what is going on within the characters, especially the major? Explain your answer.

6. What does the major mean when he says that a man must not marry because "... he should not place himself in a position to lose. He should find things he cannot lose"?

7. How does the major's announcement of the death of his wife confirm your opinion of his strength of character?

B. 1. What writers in your national literature have treated the theme of war and the isolation and loneliness it brings? How do they compare with Hemingway in the "lean style" for which he is famous?

2. Write a short esay in which you illustrate the sense of isolation or loneliness which life in modern urban society can bring.

3. Choose a situation which lends itself to high emotional effect, such as the cruel death of a young person or grief over unrequited love, and compose a short story using Hemingway's style—preponderant use of the active voice, short, economical sentences, simple sentence structure, sparing use of modifiers—to give an overall effect of understatement and restraint.

CHAPTER XXIX

WILLIAM FAULKNER

WILLIAM FAULKNER (1897-1962)

I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance. The poet's, the writer's duty is to write about these things. It is his privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past. The poet's voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail.

—from his speech delivered on December 10, 1950, in Stockholm, Sweden, when he received the Nobel Prize for Literature

Though Faulkner (1897-1962) never became an expatriate as Hemingway did, he nevertheless returned home as an outsider. He tells his own story most directly in *Sartoris*. When young Bayard Sartoris comes back to the Mississippi town he had left when he went to war, he is desperate to know what to do. He knows that something inside him is wrong, but he is not really sure either of the disease or its cure. He wanders around the town and the surrounding countryside, talking with people, sometimes quarreling with them. He drinks liquor the more eagerly because the nation has passed the Prohibition law and alcohol is now illegal. The liquor, however, gives him only temporary forgetfulness. The desperation is still there.

In a key section of this novel by Faulkner we follow Bayard Sartoris through a reckless, futile day. He gets drunk in the back room of the local store. Then he goes with a friend to look at some horses and sees a very spirited stallion. He jumps on it; the horse runs off wildly and Bayard is knocked unconscious by a tree limb. As our first excerpt opens, it is nighttime and, head bandaged, Bayard must while away the night. With him is a salesman named Hub, a freight agent named Mitch, and three Negroes. The Negroes are a musical trio, brought along to serenade with their instruments. They all ride in Bayard's automobile.

They are a varied group. Hub and Mitch are both white but much lower on the social scale than Bayard, and they know it. The Negroes are at the bottom of the scale. As Faulkner treats them, they are anonymous but are sympathetically described.

In later works Faulkner put into his

novels some of the most memorable Negroes to appear in American literature. Although they are usually shown from a Southern point of view, Faulkner is perfectly aware that Negroes are human beings like himself, but ones who have suffered much because of the color of their skin. He treats them more sympathetically in his books than he treats the poor whites, whom he sometimes shows in a very unfavorable light. The worst whites in his work, created as the members of a family named Snopes, are almost inhuman in their evil energy. He had not yet created them when he wrote *Sartoris*. They appear in some of his later novels, where they crowd out people like the Sartorises, the futile aristocrats. Hub and Mitch in *Sartoris*, however, are decent men; nothing like the clan of Snopes.

SELECTION I

In the first excerpt from *Sartoris*, the six men drink and drive through the moonlit country. At a neighboring town they stop and tell the Negroes to serenade the girls who live at a college there. In the second excerpt they have finished the serenading and are back in their own town. The local marshal stops them when they reach the town square. With kindly firmness he sees to it that the Negroes start on their way home, and suggests that Mitch and Hub do the same. That leaves Bayard, still dazed with drink, still restless, still desperate. But he knows that the marshal is right in wanting him off the streets. When the marshal takes him to the little local jail, he gives Bayard his own bed to sleep on. As the scene ends, the moonlit night is completely calm except for Bayard.

The conflict in this novel is not, as it will be in Faulkner's later novels, between generations, classes, or races, but between man and his surroundings, and between man and himself.

In his later novels Faulkner used many literary devices to enrich his fiction, and employed a complicated, involved style. But here he writes clearly, sometimes in a simple, poetic manner. Although he shifts frequently from one small scene to another, the novel has nothing like the complex style of his later years.

From Sartoris, Section II

Later they returned for the jug in Bayard's car, Bayard and Hub and a third young man, freight agent at the railway station, with three negroes and a bull fiddle[1] in the rear seat. But they drove no farther than the edge of the field above the house and stopped there while Hub went on afoot down the sandy road toward the barn. The moon stood pale and cold overhead, and on all sides insects shrilled in the dusty undergrowth. In the rear seat the negroes murmured among themselves.

"Fine night," Mitch, the freight agent, suggested. Bayard made no reply. He smoked moodily, his head closely helmeted in its white bandage. Moon and insects were one, audible and visible, dimensionless and without source.

After a while Hub materialized against the dissolving vagueness of the road, crowned by the silver slant of his hat, and he came up and swung the jug on to the door and removed the stopper. Mitch passed it to Bayard.

"Drink," Bayard said, and Mitch did so. The others drank.

"We ain't got nothin' for the niggers to drink out of," Hub said.

"That's so," Mitch agreed. He turned in his seat. "Ain't one of you boys got a cup or something?" The negroes murmured again, questioning one another in mellow consternation.

"Wait," Bayard said. He got out and lifted the hood and removed the cap from the breather-pipe. "It'll taste a little like oil

1. bull fiddle: slang for bass viol.

for a drink or two. But you boys won't notice it after that."

"Naw, suh," the negroes agreed in chorus. One took the cup and wiped it out with the corner of his coat, and they too drank in turn, with smacking expulsions of breath. Bayard replaced the cap and got in the car.

"Anybody want another right now?" Hub asked, poising the corn cob.[2]

"Give Mitch another," Bayard directed. "He'll have to catch up."

Mitch drank again. Then Bayard took the jug and tilted it. The others watched him respectfully.

"Dam'f he don't drink it," Mitch murmured. "I'd be afraid to hit it so often, if I was you."

"It's my damned head." Bayard lowered the jug and passed it to Hub. "I keep thinking another drink will ease it off some."

"Doc put that bandage on too tight," Hub said. "Want it loosened some?"

"I don't know." Bayard lit another cigarette and threw the match away. "I believe I'll take it off. It's been on there long enough." He raised his hands and fumbled at the bandage.

"You better let it alone," Mitch warned him. But he continued to fumble at the fastening; then he slid his fingers beneath a turn of the cloth and tugged at it savagely. One of the negroes leaned forward with a pocket knife and severed it, and they watched him as he stripped it off and flung it away.

"You ought not to done that," Mitch told him.

"Ah, let him take it off if he wants." Hub said. "He's all right." He got in and stowed the jug away between his knees, and Bayard turned the car about. The sandy road hissed beneath the broad tires of it and rose shaling[3] into the woods again where the dappled moonlight was intermittent, treacherous with dissolving vistas. Invisible and sourceless among the shifting patterns of light and shade, whippoorwills were like flutes tongued liquidly. The road passed out of the woods and descended, with sand in shifting and silent lurches, and they turned on to the valley road and away from town.

The car went on, on the dry hissing of the closed muffler. The negroes murmured among themselves with mellow snatches of laughter whipped like scraps of torn paper away behind. They passed the iron gates and Bayard's home serenely in the moonlight among its trees, and the silent, box-like flag station and the metal-roofed cotton gin on the railroad siding.

The road rose at last into hills. It was smooth and empty and winding, and the negroes fell silent as Bayard increased speed. But still it was not anything like what they had anticipated of him. Twice more they stopped and drank, and then from an ultimate hilltop they looked down upon another cluster of lights like a clotting of beads upon the pale gash where the railroad ran. Hub produced the breather-cap and they drank again.

Through streets identical with those at home they moved slowly, toward an identical square. People on the square turned and looked curiously after them. They crossed the square and followed another street and went on between broad lawns and shaded windows, and presently beyond an iron fence and well back among black-and-silver trees, lighted windows hung in ordered tiers like rectangular lanterns strung among the branches.

They stopped here, in shadow. The negroes descended and lifted the bass viol

2. corn cob: here, the stopper of a jug.

3. shaling: unevenly.

out, and a guitar. The third one held a slender tube frosted over with keys upon which the intermittent moon glinted in pale points, and they stood with their heads together, murmuring among themselves and touching plaintive muted chords from the strings. Then the one with the clarinet raised it to his lips.

The tunes were old tunes. Some of them were sophisticated tunes and formally intricate, but in the rendition this was lost, and all of them were imbued instead with a plaintive similarity, a slurred and rhythmic simplicity; and they drifted in rich, plaintive chords upon the silver air, fading, dying in minor reiterations along the treacherous vistas of the moon. They played again, an old waltz. The college Cerberus[4] came across the dappled lawn to the fence and leaned his arms upon it, a lumped listening shadow among other shadows. Across the street, in the shadows there, other listeners stood. A car approached and slowed to the curb and shut off engine and lights, and in the tiered windows heads leaned, aureoled against the lighted rooms behind, without individuality, feminine, distant, delicately and divinely young.

They played "Home, Sweet Home," and when the rich minor died away, across to them came a soft clapping of slender palms. Then Mitch sang "Good Night, Ladies" in his true, over-sweet tenor, and the young hands were more importunate, and as they drove away the slender heads leaned aureoled with bright hair in the lighted windows and the soft clapping drifted after them for a long while, fainter and fainter in the silver silence and the moon's infinitude. . .

4. Cerberus: in Greek mythology, the three-headed dog guarding the gate of Hades; here, a watchman.

SELECTION I

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does Faulkner create mood and atmosphere in this excerpt?
2. What is the attitude of the white men toward the Negroes?
3. Does the serenade serve any particular purpose in the story?
4. What hints do you have, if any, of Bayard's inner tensions?
5. What are your impressions of Bayard as a person? Do you like him or dislike him? Why?

SELECTION II

SARTORIS

From Section II (continued)

The moon stood well down the sky. Its light was now a cold silver on things, spent and a little wearied, and the world was empty as they rolled without lights along a street lifeless and fixed in black and silver as any street in the moon itself. Beneath stippled intermittent shadows they went, passed quiet intersections dissolving away, occasionally a car motionless at the curb before a house. A dog crossed the street ahead of them trotting, and went on across a lawn and so from sight, but saving this there was no movement anywhere.

The square opened spaciously about the absinthe-cloudy mass of elms that surrounded the courthouse. Among them the round spaced globes were more like huge, pallid grapes than ever. Above the exposed vault in each bank burned a single bulb; inside the hotel lobby, before which a row of cars was aligned, another burned. Other lights there were none.

They circled the courthouse, and a shadow moved near the hotel door and detached itself from shadow and came to the curb, a white shirt glinting within a spread coat; and as the car swung slowly toward another street, the man hailed them. Bayard stopped and the man came through the blanched dust and laid his hand on the door.

"Hi, Buck," Mitch said. "You're up pretty late, ain't you?"

The man had a sober, good-natured horse's face. He wore a metal star on his unbuttoned waistcoat. His coat humped slightly over his hip. "What you boys doin'?" he asked. "Been to a dance?"

"Serenading," Bayard answered. "Want a drink, Buck?"

"No, much obliged." He stood with his hand on the door, gravely and good-naturedly serious. "Ain't you fellers out kind of late, yo'selves?"

"It is gettin' on[1], Mitch agreed. The marshal lifted his foot to the running-board. Beneath his hat his eyes were in shadow. "We're going home now," Mitch said. The other pondered quietly, and Bayard added:

"Sure; we're on our way home now."

The marshal moved his head slightly and spoke to the negroes. "I reckon you boys are about ready to turn in[2], ain't you?"

"Yes, suh," the negroes answered, and they got out and lifted the viol out. Bayard gave Reno a bill and they thanked him and said good night and picked up the viol and departed quietly down a side street. The marshal turned his head again.

"Ain't that yo' car in front of Rogers' cafe, Mitch?" he asked.

"Reckon so. That's where I left it."

"Well, suppose you run Hub out home, lessen[3] he's goin' to stay in town tonight. Bayard better come with me."

"Aw, hell, Buck," Mitch protested.

"What for? Bayard demanded.

"His folks are worried about him," the other answered. "They ain't seen hide nor hair of him since that stallion throwed him. Where's yo' bandage, Bayard?"

"Took it off," he answered shortly. "See here, Buck, we're going to put Mitch out and then Hub and me are going straight home."

"You been on yo' way home ever since fo' o'clock, Bayard," the marshal replied soberly, "but you don't seem to git no nearer there. I reckon you better come with me tonight, like yo' aunt said."

"Did Aunt Jenny tell you to arrest me?"

"They was worried about you, son. Miss Jenny just phoned and asked me to kind of see if you was all right until mawnin'[4]. So I reckon we better. You ought to went on home this evening'."

"Aw, have a heart,[5] Buck," Mitch protested.

"I ruther[6] make Bayard mad than Miss Jenny," the other answered patiently. "You boys go on, and Bayard better come with me."

Mitch and Hub got out and Hub lifted

1. gettin' on: (colloq.) getting on, becoming late.
2. turn in: go to bed.
3. lessen: (dialect) unless.
4. mawnin': (dialect) morning.
5. have a heart: take pity
6. ruther: (dialect) would rather.

out his jug and they said good night and went on to where Mitch's car stood before the restaurant. The marshal got in beside Bayard. The jail was not far. It loomed presently above its walled court, square and implacable, its slitted upper windows brutal as saber-blows. They turned into an alley, and the marshal descended and opened a gate, and Bayard drove into the grassless and littered compound and stopped while the other went on ahead to a small garage in which stood a Ford. He backed this out and motioned Bayard forward. The garage was built to the Ford's dimensions and about a third of Bayard's car stuck out the door of it.

"Better'n nothin', though," the marshal said. "Come on." They entered through the kitchen, into the jailkeeper's living-quarters, and Bayard waited in a dark passage until the other found a light. Then he entered a bleak, neat room, containing spare conglomerate furnishings and a few scattered articles of masculine apparel.

"Say," Bayard objected, "aren't you giving me your bed?"

"Won't need it befo' mawnin'," the other answered. "You'll be gone, then. Want me to he'p you off with yo' clothes?"

"No. I'm all right." Then, more graciously: "Good night, Buck. And much obliged."

"Good night," the marshal answered.

He closed the door behind him and Bayard removed his coat and shoes and his tie and snapped the light off and lay on the bed. Moonlight seeped into the room impalpably, refracted and sourceless; the night was without any sound. Beyond the window a cornice rose in a succession of shallow steps against the opaline and dimensionless sky. His head was clear and cold; the whisky he had drunk was completely dead. Or rather, it was as though his head were one Bayard who lay on a strange bed and whose alcohol-dulled nerves radiated like threads of ice through that body which he must drag forever about a bleak and barren world with him. "Hell," he said, lying on his back, staring out the window where nothing was to be seen, waiting for sleep, not knowing if it would come or not, not caring a particular damn either way. Nothing to be seen, and the long, long span of a man's natural life. Three score and ten years to drag stubborn body about the world and cozen its insistent demands. Three score and ten, the Bible said. Seventy years. And he was only twenty-six. Not much more than a third through it. Hell. . .

SELECTION II

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

A. 1. Is the marshal more interested in Bayard's welfare or in getting the group off the street? Give your reasons.

2. What kind of person is the marshal?

3. Has Bayard succeeded in dissipating some of his inner conflict?

4. Do you feel any kinship with Bayard in his clash with his surroundings and with himself? Explain.

5. Do you think that our urban and technological way of life tends to create in us more tensions and a greater disenchantment with life than that found in a rural, agriculture-based existence?

B. 1. Write a short composition in which you compare Faulkner's style of writing with that of Hemingway.

2. What writer in your national literature would you compare with Faulkner? Prepare a short speech in which you support your choice with examples from his (or her) writings.

3. In his acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize, Faulkner said: "I believe that man will not merely endure; he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance." Debate this observation with your classmates.

CHAPTER XXX

ROBERT FROST

ROBERT FROST (1874-1963)

A poem is never a put-up job so to speak. It begins as a lump in the throat, a sense of wrong, a homesickness, a lovesickness. It is never a thought to begin with. It is at its best when it is a tantalizing vagueness. It finds its thought and succeeds, or doesn't find it and comes to nothing. It finds its thought or makes its thought. I suppose it finds it lying around with others not so much to its purpose in a more or less full mind. That's why it oftener comes to nothing in youth before experience has filled the mind with thoughts. It may be a big emotion then and yet finds nothing it can embody in. If finds the thought and the thought finds the words. Let's say again. A poem particularly must not begin thought first.

—from his letter to Louis Untermeyer written on January 1, 1916

As poets go, Frost (1874-1963) was no longer young when he published his first book of poems, *A Boy's Will*, in 1913. Though born in San Francisco, he came of a New England family which returned to New England when he was ten. Like many other writers, he had a brief brush with college and then supported himself by various means, ranging from shoe-making to editing a country newspaper. However, he had been brought up on a farm and he liked farming. Most of all, he liked to write but he could not support himself by writing. He was in his late 30s when he moved to England, where he issued his first book and found an appreciation for his work he had not found in America.

At the outbreak of World War I, Frost went back to farming in New Hampshire. Thereafter, although he made many journeys and frequent visits elsewhere, he considered the farm his home and its activities remained the focus of his poetry.

Frost's verses became part of a great tradition, shaped by the Roman poet Vergil, of what is called bucolic poetry—poetry about farming. However, though he used farm situations in much of his poetry, he gave them a wide application. He might write about stepping on a rake and describe the feeling when it hit him, but he used the incident to show how life gives us bruises.

Some talents in poetry are used up early, but not Frost's. He continued to publish fine poetry for fifty years. He reached the height of his popularity after World War II. If America of the 20th century had a national poet, it was Frost. He was chosen to read one of his poems at the inauguration of the late President John F. Kennedy, the first poet ever so honored.

Because Frost wrote so well for so long, it is hard to select poems to reprint. Here, however, are two favorites among readers, "Mending Wall" and "The Road Not Taken," plus three short, lesser known poems.

"Mending Wall' shows Frost at work with a neighbor, helping to repair a stone wall that separates their two farms. Frost dislikes walls; his neighbor likes them. We soon see that the walls Frost is talking about are all the things that separate one human being from another, all the things in life that keeps us from loving our fellow man. Yet Frost never makes a sermon of his poem. He teaches the brotherhood of man, but not tediously. What keeps the poem from being pious is, first, Frost's whimsical humor and, second, the easy informality of his lines. The poem is written in what is termed blank verse. It has five beats to a line, and the beat comes on every second syllable. Also, the lines do not rhyme. But Frost takes the blank-verse form, shakes it up, loosens it, and makes it sound almost like everyday conversation. The point is, however, that it turns out to be a wise and beautiful conversation.

"The Road Not Taken" is set in some woods but the place where it occurs is really anywhere and any time. It is, so to speak, the land of "Might Have Been." We must make a decision. We must decide which way to go. This universal dilemma Frost turns into poetry of gentle yet strong understanding. Here there is nothing local or folksy in the words he uses. His message is worldwide. He also has fewer of his personal, colloquial rhythms in these lines than in "Mending Wall," and the form of the poem is one of stanzas, each regular in its arrangement of rhymes.

"Fire and Ice," "Acquainted with the Night," and "Design" seem at first reading to be lucidly simple, yet after better acquaintance they turn out to be rich in hidden meanings. There is a certain reticence, a teasing indirectness, in Frost's way of telling his thought, evident in these three short poems. He often leaves the reader to search for any implied significance and frequently implies a more general meaning to his moral than he seems to state. He appears not to commit himself to any solution which runs the danger of being too simple. On one occasion he said: ". . .I prefer the synecdoche in poetry—that figure of speech in which we use a part for the whole." Life, as Frost saw it, is full of apparent paradoxes. It is tragic and hilariously comic, beautiful and ugly, chaotic and unified, and he refused to take an either/or position, as we will see in such poems as "Fire and Ice" and "Design."

Selection 1

MENDING WALL

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen ground-swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.

The work of hunters is another thing:
I have come after them and made repair
Where they have left not one stone on a stone,
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,
No one has seen them made or heard them made,
But at spring mending-time we find them there.
I let my neighbor know beyond the hill;
And on a day we meet to walk the line
And set the wall between us once again.
We keep the wall between us as we go.
To each the boulders that have fallen to each.
And some are loaves and some so nearly balls
We have to use a spell to make them balance:
"Stay where you are until our backs are turned!"
We wear our fingers rough with handling them.
Oh, just another kind of outdoor game,
One on a side. It comes to little more:
There where it is we do not need the wall:
He is all pine and I am apple-orchard.
My apple trees will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
He only says, "Good fences make good neighbors."
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
If I could put a notion in his head:
"*Why* do they make good neighbors? Isn't it
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to[1] give offense.
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That wants it down!" I could say "elves" to him,
But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather
He said it for himself. I see him there,
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top
In each hand, like and old-stone savage[2] armed.
He moves in darkness, as it seems to me,
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.
He will not go behind his father's saying,
And he likes having thought of it so well
He says again, "Good fences make good neighbors."

1. was like to: might; was likely to.
2. old-stone savage: man of the Old Stone Age.

Selection II

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

SELECTION I & II

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Mending Wall

A. 1. What do you think the theme of the poem is?
2. Why do you think the poet refers to the mending of the wall as "just another kind of outdoor game"?
3. How does the speaker's attitude toward mending the wall compare with that of his neighbor?
4. In lines 40-45, what kind of darkness surrounds the neighbor?
5. "Something there is that doesn't love a wall." What do you think it is?
6. In your opinion, does Frost think that following tradition is always a good thing? Quote lines from the poem to support your answer. Do you think following tradition is a good thing?
7. How can the barrier between individuals be broken down? the barrier between peoples of different nations?

219

8. What gives the poem a conversational tone?

B. 1. Write a short essay in which you discuss the symbolic meaning of the wall in this poem.

2. Conduct a debate or round-table discussion on the ideas of the two men in "Mending Wall" as they apply to the international situation or to the situation in your own country.

The Road Not Taken

A. 1. What human traits are suggested by the first stanza of the poem?

2. What is the theme of the poem?

3. In what way does the poem suggest that Frost was a non-conformist?

4. Do you think the line, "Yet knowing how way leads on to way" is fatalistic in tone? Explain your answer.

B. 1. What choices in your own life have made a difference in the course it has taken?

2. Do you think that the choices we make in life ultimately turn out to be the right ones? Explain your reasons in a short speech of one to two minutes in length.

Selection III

FIRE AND ICE

Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.
From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.
But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.

Selection IV

ACQUAINTED WITH THE NIGHT

I have been one acquainted with the night.
I have walked out in rain—and back in rain.
I have outwalked the furthest city light.

I have looked down the saddest city lane.
I have passed by the watchman on his beat
And dropped my eyes, unwilling to explain.

I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet
When far away an interrupted cry
Came over houses from another street,

But not to call me back or say good-bye;
And further still at an unearthly height
One luminary clock against the sky

Proclaimed the time as neither wrong nor right.
I have been one acquainted with the night.

Selection V

DESIGN

I found a dimpled spider, fat and white,
On a white heal-all,[1] holding up a moth
Like a white piece of rigid satin cloth—
Assorted characters of death and blight
Mixed ready to begin the morning right,
Like the ingredients of a witches' broth—
A snow-drop spider, a flower like a froth,
And dead wings carried like a paper kite.

What had that flower to do with being white,
The wayside blue and innocent heal-all?
What brought the kindred spider to that height,
Then steered the white moth thither in the night?
What but design of darkness to appall?—
If design govern in a thing so small.

1. heal-all: a kind of wild flower.

SELECTIONS III, IV and V

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Fire and Ice

1. What is the complex idea which is expressed in a few words in this poem?
2. Explain the associations that the poet uses for fire and ice.
3. What are your own thoughts on the end of the world?

Acquainted With the Night

1. What does the poet mean when he says he has been "one acquainted with the night"?
2. What images does the poet use to project the idea of loneliness or rejection?
3. What picture is conveyed by lines 7-10?
4. What is the luminary clock referred to in line 12? Why was the time neither wrong nor right?

Design

1. The heal-all was once supposed to have healing qualities, hence its name. Of what significance is the fact that the spider, the heal-all, and the moth are all white?
2. Is it significant that the spider is "dimpled" and "fat" and like a "snow-drop," and that the flower is "innocent" and named "heal-all"? Give your reasons.
3. What question does the poem pose about the existence of God? What twist does Frost give in answer to this question?
4. Contrast the content of "Design" with Bryant's poem, "To a Waterfowl." Which point of view do you most admire? Explain your answer.

CHAPTER XXXI

ARCHIBALD MacLEISH
WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS
LANGSTON HUGHES

THREE OTHER MODERN POETS

One reason why some people resent modern poetry is that they prefer poetry which helps them forget the dreariness and the menace of daily experience. But this is not the only use of poetry. some is written not to take you away from life, but to return you to it, only with a more intense insight into its nature. Wallace Stevens wrote that "the wonder and mystery of art . . . is the revelation of something wholly other by which the inexpressible loneliness of thinking is broken and enriched." The poem refreshes life, Stevens once said. It does so by making you see in the world around you things you had never seen before.

—Paul Engle in *The United States in Literature*, 1968, p. 542

Archibald MacLeish (1892-)

Archibald MacLeish was born in Glencoe, Illinois and educated at Yale, Harvard, and Tufts Universities. After World War I, in which he served as a captain in the artillery, MacLeish returned to teach in the Harvard Law School. Subsequently, he left teaching to practice law in Boston, but gave up a successful practice because "he never could believe in it." He wanted to write poetry.

In 1923 he left for Paris with his wife and children in order to submerge himself in the literary atmosphere of that city and to write his own poetry in his own way. "I speak to my own time / To no time after," he wrote and dated the beginning of his life from the year 1923. While in France, MacLeish produced three volumes of poetry—*Streets In The Moon* (1926), *The Hamlet Of A. MacLeish* (1928), and *New Found Land* (1930)—the success of which was assurance that his decision to turn from law to poetry had indeed been a wise one.

After he returned to the United States in 1928, MacLeish went to Mexico where he retraced Cortes' route from the coast of the Gulf of Mexico to the valley of Tenochtitlan.[1] The result was a narrative poem, *Conquistador*, based on Bernal Diaz's *True History Of The Conquest Of New Spain*, published in 1932. The following year it received the Pulitzer Prize.[2]

Shortly after publication of *Conquistador*, MacLeish became a member of the staff of

1. Tenochtitlan: ancient name of Mexico City, Aztec capital.
2. Pulitzer Prize: award for outstanding literary or journalistic achievement.

Time and *Fortune* magazines, writing articles for the latter magazine which set standards of journalistic excellence in "documentary" literature. Displaying the same skill that distinguished his articles in *Fortune*, MacLeish also wrote experimental plays for radio production, *The Fall Of The City* (1937) and *Air Raid* (1938). In 1939 MacLeish was appointed Librarian of Congress and received an honorary degree from Yale. These honors soon brought to him other advancements in his career, and in 1944 he was appointed public relations counsel in the office of the Secretary of State.

Although MacLeish won a Pulitzer Prize for a narrative poem, his poetic reputation rests largely upon his lyric poetry such as *Poems, 1924-1933*, and *Collected Poems 1917-1952*, for which he won a second Pulitzer Prize in 1953. In his poetic writing MacLeish reflects a certain indebtedness to Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, and Carl Sandburg. Yet the lasting value of his poetry rests upon a lyrical gift and a phrasing of rhetoric which is his alone. Instead of inhabiting a poet's ivory tower, MacLeish has shown interest in political movements, worked at different occupations, and investigated different professions. This involvement with the currents of everyday life is reflected in the sensibility of his poetry, much of which is a satiric commentary on 20th-century life.

Selection I

DR. SIGMUND FREUD DISCOVERS THE SEA SHELL

Science, that simple saint, cannot be bothered
Figuring what anything is for:
Enough for her devotions that things are
And can be contemplated soon as gathered.

She knows how every living thing was fathered,
She calculates the climate of each star,
She counts the fish at sea, but cannot care
Why any one of them exists, fish, fire or feathered.

Why should she? Her religion is to tell
By rote her rosary of perfect answers.
Metaphysics she can leave to man:
She never wakes at night in heaven or hell

Staring at darkness. In her holy cell
There is no darkness ever: the pure candle
Burns, the beads drop briskly from her hand.

Who dares to offer Her the curled sea shell!
She will not touch it!—knows the world she sees
Is all the world there is! Her faith is perfect!

And still she offers the sea shell. . .
What surf
Of what far sea upon what unknown ground
Troubles forever with that asking sound?
What surge is this whose question never ceases?

Selection II

ARS POETICA

A poem should be palpable and mute
As a globed fruit,

Dumb
As old medallions to the thumb,

Silent as the sleeve-worn stone
Of casement ledges where the moss has grown—

A poem should be wordless
As the flight of birds.

A poem should be motionless in time
As the moon climbs,

Leaving, as the moon releases
Twig by twig the night-entangled trees,

Leaving, as the moon behind the winter leaves,
Memory by memory the mind—

A poem should be motionless in time
As the moon climbs.

A poem should be equal to:
Not true.

For all the history of grief
An empty doorway and a maple leaf.

For love
The leaning grasses and two lights above the sea—

A poem should not mean
But be.

SELECTIONS I and II

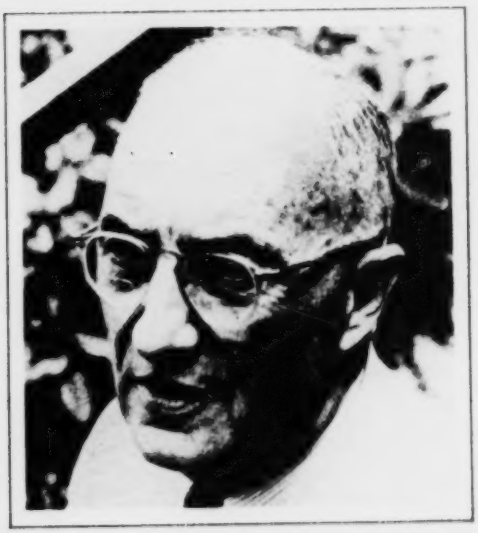
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Dr. Sigmund Freud Discovers The Sea Shell

1. This poem employs an extended personification. Cite the ways in which science is appropiately compared to a saint.
2. In what way is science's faith perfect?
3. Who is the "she" in line 19? What does the sea shell represent?
4. Who was Sigmund Freud, and what discoveries did he make about human nature?
5. What is the meaning of the last stanza?
6. Do you agree with the viewpoint of the poem? Give your reasons.

Ars Poetica

1. How can a poem be "wordless"? "motionless in time"?
2. The title of the poem is Latin, meaning "The Art of Poetry." It is traditionally used as the title for works on the philosophy of poetry. What is the poet's philosophy of poetry? Do you agree? Give your reasons.
3. Write your own definition of poetry, either in prose or poetry.



William Carlos Williams (1884-1963)

Born in Rutherford, New Jersey, William Carlos Williams studied medicine at the University of Pennsylvania and spent a year of graduate study in pediatrics at Leipzig. Although as a doctor he spent much of his time seeing patients and delivering babies around his home-town of Rutherford, he still found time to write more than 37 volumes of prose and poetry.

Williams began his literary career in 1909 with the publication of *Poems*, a volume which consisted mainly of verse written in an imitative style. It reflects the influence of his days at the University of Pennsylvania where Williams had become

friends with the poet, Ezra Pound. As a result of this unique friendship, he became temporarily attached to the Imagist group, and though this association was brief, it left an enduring imprint on his poetic work.

Williams' poetry is characterized by his interest in everyday events. His verse may deal with such ordinary things as spring, a red wheelbarrow, flowers, plums, or yachts in a seascape. His writing reflects the physician's fondness for scrutinizing material things from an interior point of view, as well as people under all conditions of life. He views people from the moment of their birth until the moment of their death. Although the tone of his poetry is casual, his fondness for close observation imparts insight and substance to the final product.

In 1946, Williams began his long masterpiece, *Paterson*, and finished the four projected books in 1951. But he could not bring himself to end the poem and continued writing until he finished Book V in 1958. He was at work on Book VI at the time of his death in 1963. *Paterson* is the epic of a man-city, weaving together history, the contemporary scene, individual joy and personal anguish. In its tone and mood it displays a certain similarity to Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*.

Probably more than any other modern poet, Williams searched for an American idiom, and in this search he developed his singular, personal style. His poetry remained affirmative and committed at a time when much of modern American poetry seemed to be negative and alienated, and his style maintained a simplicity and lucidity while other contemporary poetry progressed to intellectualism and deliberate ambiguity.

Selection I

TRACT

I will teach you my townspeople
how to perform a funeral—
for you have it over a troop
of artists—
unless one should scour the world—
you have the ground sense necessary.

See! the hearse leads.
I begin with a design for a hearse.
For Christ's sake no black—
nor white either—and not polished!
Let it be weathered—like a farm wagon—
with gilt wheels (this could be
applied fresh at small expense)
or no wheels at all:
a rough dray to drag over the ground.

Knock the glass out!
My God—glass, my townspeople!
For what purpose? Is it for the dead
to look out or for us to see
how well he is housed or to see
the flowers or the lack of them—

or what?
To keep the rain and snow from him?
He will have a heavier rain soon:
pebbles and dirt and what not.
Let there be no glass—
and no upholstery! phew!
and no little brass rollers
and small easy wheels on the bottom—
my townspeople what are you thinking of!

A rough plain hearse then
with gilt wheels and no top at all.
On this the coffin lies
by its own weight.

No wreaths please—
especially no hot-house flowers.
Some common memento is better,
something he prized and is known by:
his old clothes—a few books perhaps—
God knows what! You realize
how we are about these things,
my townspeople—
something will be found—anything—
even flowers if he had come to that.

For heaven's sake though see to the driver!
Take off that silk hat! In fact
that's no place at all for him
up there unceremoniously
dragging our friend out to his own dignity!
Bring him down—bring him down!
Low and inconspicuous! I'd not have him ride
on the wagon at all—damn him—
the undertaker's understrapper!
Let him hold the reins
and walk at the side
and inconspicuously too!

Then briefly as to yourselves:
Walk behind—as they do in France,
seventh class, or if you ride
Hell take curtains! Go with some show
of inconvenience; sit openly—
to the weather as to grief.
Or do you think you can shut grief in?
What—from us? We who have perhaps
nothing to lose? Share with us
share with us—it will be money
in your pockets.

Go now

I think you are ready.

Selection II

THE RED WHEELBARROW

So much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens

SELECTIONS I & II

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Tract

1. What kind of design for a hearse does the poet prefer? What does he prefer instead of flowers?

2. Why do you think the poet wants the driver to play an inconspicuous role?

3. Who is the "we" in the last stanza?

EST COPY AVAILABLE

4. Is it true that people often feel that a funeral entails inconveniences, as the poet suggests? Explain your answer.
5. Explain the meaning of the following lines from the last stanza. What is to be shared?

> We who have perhaps
> nothing to lose? Share with us
> share with us—it will be money
> in your pockets.

6. Should grief at the death of a loved one be kept shut in? Explain your answer.
7. Does the conversational tone of the poem add to its effectiveness? Give your reasons.
8. Do you agree with the poet's ideas on how to perform a funeral? Discuss.

The Red Wheelbarrow

1. Give your own interpretration of the meaning of this poem.
2. Can you suggest objects other than a red wheelbarrow which would also serve as a poetic image? Explain your choices.

Langston Hughes (1902-1967)

Besides being a poet, playwright, novelist, songwriter, biographer, editor, newspaper columnist, translator and lecturer, Langston Hughes also included in his prolific career earlier stints as a merchant seaman, a chef (in Paris), and a beachcomber (in Italy and Spain). Born in Joplin, Missouri, on February 1, 1902, he lived the first twelve years of his life in Kansas, Colorado, Indiana, and New York State. He graduated from high school in Cleveland, Ohio, where in his senior year he was elected class poet and editor of the yearbook. Hughes' other travels included trips to Europe and Africa, and the character of his adventurous, wandering life was reflected in such works as his novel, *Not Without Laughter* (1930), his short stories, and his autobiography.

Hughes received recognition as a poet when, as a young man working as a waiter in a Washington, D.C. hotel, he showed some of his poems to a guest, the eminent poet, Vachel Lindsay. Linday enthusiastically introduced the poems to a literary gathering at the hotel and Hughes' first book, *The Weary Blues*, was published as a result of the encouragement he received from Lindsay.

By 1925, Hughes, together with other Negro writers, had formed a group in the Harlem section of New York City for the purpose of exchanging ideas, encouraging one another, and, eventually, sharing in the triumph created by the sudden popularity of their work. As spokesman for the group, Hughes published an article, "The Negro Artist and The Racial Mountain," which amounted to a public declaration of the intent of Hughes and his contemporaries to break from their literary heritage and to initiate a new trend in Negro literature. For new black writers, Harlem and its people were to provide the inspiration for much of their artistic work.

In later years, Hughes became known as the "O. Henry of Harlem" and wrote countless short stories, a number of volumes of poetry, seven novels, and six plays. In his early volumes of poetry, he successfully caught and projected scenes of urban Negro life, and his sketches in verse with their undertones of bitterness, humor, and pathos became also a form of social protest.

In constant demand as a lecturer, Hughes traveled on speaking tours throughout the United States, to the West Indies, and to parts of Europe and Africa. He received many awards and honors for his writings, which have been translated into more than 25 languages.

Selection I

DREAMS

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.
Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

Selection II

THE NEGRO SPEAKS OF RIVERS

I've known rivers:
I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the
flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.
I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln
went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy
bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:
Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

Selection III

MOTHER TO SON

"Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

It's had tacks in it;
And splinters,
And boards torn up.

And places with no carpet on the floor—
Bare.
But all the time
I'se[1] been a' climbin' on,
And turnin' corners,

And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.

So, boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you find it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now—
For I'se still goin', honey,
I'se still climbin'
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair."

1. I'se: (dialect) I have.

SELECTIONS I, II & III

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Dreams

1. What is the symbolic meaning of "Life is a broken-winged bird"?
2. Does the theme of this poem have a universal significance? Give your reasons.
3. Could this be called a "protest" poem? Explain.
4. How does the fact that the poem was written by a Negro poet give it a special poignancy?

The Negro Speaks of Rivers

1. What does the poet mean when he says that his soul has grown deep like the rivers?
2. What is the purpose of the second stanza?
3. How do the repetitions heighten the effectiveness of the poem?
4. Is there any relationship between the thought expressed in this poem and that of the other two Hughes' poems included here? Discuss.

Mother To Son

1. What is the central thought of this poem?
2. What symbolic meaning is attached to "crystal stair"?
3. List the admirable human qualities which you think the mother possesses.
4. Does the mother's counsel have universal application? Explain.

CHAPTER XXXII

KATHERINE ANNE PORTER

KATHERINE ANNE PORTER (1894-1980)

As soon as I learned to form letters on paper, at about three years, I began to write stories, and this has been the basic and absorbing occupation, the intact line of my life which directs my actions, determines my point of view, and profoundly affects my character and personality, my social beliefs and economic status, and the kind of friendships I form.

—Quoted in Walter Blair, et al.
The Literature of the United States, Vol. II

Born in Indian Creek, Texas, in 1894, a great-great-great granddaughter of the famous American frontiersman, Daniel Boone, Katherine Anne Porter spent her early life in Texas and Louisiana. From her earliest childhood she was interested in writing stories. She was educated in convent schools of the South and, after graduation, worked as a newspaper reporter in Dallas and Denver. Illness forced her to give up her career as a journalist. She has traveled extensively and has lived in New York City, in Europe, and in Mexico. Drawing on her experience and travels, she has employed a variety of backgrounds in her fiction.

Miss Porter's first published volume was *Flowering Judas and Other Stories*, which appeared in 1930. In 1931 and again in 1938, she was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for creative writing. Before her novel, *Ship of Fools*, appeared in 1962, she had published only short stories and novelettes, among them *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* in 1939 and *The Leaning Tower and Other Stories* in 1944. *Through a Glass Darkly* appeared in 1958.

Miss Porter has one of the most subtle of writing talents. She makes no easy explanations to her reader, assuming that he already knows something and that he will find the rest of what he needs to know in the story. As a writer, Miss Porter is devoted to her craft, and throughout her career she has worked scrupulously and painstakingly, refusing to print anything until she is completely satisfied with it.

In many of her stories, Miss Porter explores the lives of characters who seem drawn into disillusionment and despair, sometimes by social, political, and natural forces beyond their control, often by their

own selfishness and deceit. Like Hemingway, she appears to penetrate the thoughts of people, in detail or fragmentarily, and thus enables the reader to experience the internal life of the character and his world.

In "Theft" we find an underlying structure of contrast and tension, the paradoxical problems of definition, and a characteristic refusal by the author to indulge in "formula" writing.

The setting for "Theft" is New York City. The heroine is a writer and reviewer, like Miss Porter. The time is the onset of the Great Depression of the 1930s. The stolen purse in the story symbolizes all property. Appropriately, it is made of gold cloth. Thus, the stealing of the purse represents the conflict between the "haves" and the "have-nots." But the conflict is never simple in Miss Porter's stories, nor is it easy to arrive at a facile definition of the problem. The young woman who owns the purse has little else. She is in fact close to starving and may really be poorer than the janitress. But, like the purse, she is a symbol of those who possess things which other people do not have but want. And at the end of the story, by a brilliant reversal, the janitress has succeeded in making the heroine feel that she has stolen, if not from the janitress herself, then from the janitress' niece.

The emotions running through this story are mixed, as are the sympathies of the reader. We cannot sympathize at all with Bill or Roger and perhaps only a little with Camilo. Paradoxically, both Miss Porter's nameless heroine and the janitress seem to arouse our deepest feelings of empathy.

SELECTION I

Theft

She had the purse in her hand when she came in. Standing in the middle of the floor, holding her bathrobe around her and trailing a damp towel in one hand, she surveyed the immediate past and remembered everything clearly. Yes, she had opened the flap and spread it out on the bench after she had dried the purse with her handkerchief.

She had intended to take the Elevated,[1] and naturally she looked in her purse to make certain she had the fare, and was pleased to find forty cents in the coin envelope. She was going to pay her own fare, too, even if Camilo did have the habit of seeing her up the steps and dropping a nickel in the machine before he gave the turnstile a little push and sent her through it with a bow. Camilo by a series of compromises had managed to make effective a fairly complete set of smaller courtesies, ignoring the larger and more troublesome ones. She had walked with him to the station in a pouring rain, because she knew he was almost as poor as she was, and when he insisted on a taxi, she was firm and said, "You know it simply will not do." He was wearing a new hat of a pretty biscuit shade, for it never occurred to him to buy anything of a practical color, he had put it on for the first time and the rain was spoiling it. She kept thinking, "But this is dreadful, where will he get another?" She compared it with Eddie's hats that always seemed to be precisely seven years old and as if they had been quite purposely left out in the rain, and yet they set with a careless and incidental rightness on Eddie. But Camilo was far different; if he wore a shabby hat it would be merely shabby on him, and he would lose his spirit over it. If she had not feared Camilo would take it badly, for he insisted on the prac-

1. Elevated: the elevated railway in New York City used as public transportation at the time the story takes place. It has since been torn down.

tice of his little ceremonies up to the point he had fixed for them, she would have said to him as they left Thora's house, "Do go home. I can surely reach the station by myself."

"It is written that we must be rained upon tonight," said Camilo, "so let it be together."

At the foot of the platform stairway she staggered slightly—they were both nicely set up[2] on Thora's cocktails—and said: "At least, Camilo, do me the favor not to climb these stairs in your present state, since for you it is only a matter of coming down again at once, and you'll certainly break your neck."

He made three quick bows, he was Spanish, and leaped off through the rainy darkness. She stood watching him, for he was a very graceful young man, thinking that tomorrow morning he would gaze soberly at his spoiled hat and soggy shoes and possibly associate her with his misery. As she watched, he stopped at the far corner and took off his hat and hid it under his overcoat. She felt she had betrayed him by seeing, because he would have been humiliated if he thought she even suspected him of trying to save his hat.

Roger's voice sounded over her shoulder above the clang of the rain falling on the stairway shed, wanting to know what she was doing out in the rain at this time of night, and did she take herself for a duck? His long, imperturbable face was streaming with water, and he tapped a bulging spot at the breast of his buttoned-up overcoat: "Hat," he said. "Come on, let's take a taxi."

She settled back against Roger's arm which he laid around her shoulders, and with the gesture they exchanged a glance full of long amiable associations, then she looked through the window at the rain changing the shapes of everything, and the colors. The taxi dodged in and out between the pillars of the Elevated, skidding slightly on every curve, and she said: "The more it skids the calmer I feel, so I really must be drunk."

"You must be," said Roger. "This bird is a homicidal maniac, and I could do with a cocktail myself this minute."

They waited on the traffic at Fortieth Street and Sixth Avenue, and three boys walked before the nose of the taxi. Under the globes of light they were cheerful scarecrows, all very thin and all wearing very seedy snappycut suits and gay neckties. They were not very sober either, and they stood for a moment wobbling in front of the car, and there was an argument going on among them. They leaned toward each other as if they were getting ready to sing, and the first one said: "When I get married it won't be jus' for getting married. I'm gonna marry for *love*, see?" and the second one said, "Aw, gwan[3] and tell that stuff to *her*, why n't vuh?" and the third one gave a kind of hoot, and said, "Hell, dis guy? Wot the hell's he got?" and the first one said: "Aaah, shurrup vuh mush,[4] I got plenty." Then they all squealed and scrambled across the street beating the first one on the back and pushing him around.

"Nuts,"[5] commented Roger, "pure nuts."

Two girls went skittering by in short transparent raincoats, one green, one red, their heads tucked against the drive of the rain. One of them was saying to the other, "Yes, I know all about *that*. But what about

2. set up: intoxicated, exhilarated.

3. gwan: (colloq.) go on.

4. shurrup vuh mush: (slang) shut your mouth.

5. nuts: (slang) crazy.

me? You're always so sorry for *him*. . ." and they ran on with their little pelican legs flashing back and forth.

The taxi backed up suddenly and leaped forward again, and after a while Roger said: "I had a letter from Stella today, and she'll be home on the twenty-sixth, so I suppose she's made up her mind and it's all settled."

"I had a sort of letter today too," she said, "making up my mind for me. I think it is time for you and Stella to do something definite."

When the taxi stopped on the corner of West Fifty-third Street, Roger said, "I've just enough if you'll add ten cents," so she opened her purse and gave him a dime, and he said, "That's beautiful, that purse."

"It's a birthday present," she told him, "and I like it. How's your show coming?"

"Oh, still hanging on, I guess. I don't go near the place. Nothing sold yet. I mean to keep right on the way I'm going and they can take take it or leave it. I'm through with the argument."

"It's absolutely a matter of holding out, isn't it?"

"Holding out's the tough part."

"Good night, Roger."

"Good night, you should take aspirin and push yourself into a tub of hot water, you look as though you're catching cold."

"I will."

SELECTION I

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What sort of person is Camilo? What do you think his relationship to the heroine has been?

2. How can we tell that the heroine and her friends are poor?

3. Are the heroine and Roger in love? Explain your answer.

4. Who do you think Stella is?

5. Does the rain add anything to the mood of the story? Explain.

SELECTION II

Theft (concluded)

With the purse under her arm she went upstairs, and on the first landing Bill heard her step and poked his head out with his hair tumbled and his eyes red, and he said: "For Christ's sake, come in and have a drink with me. I've had some bad news."

"You're perfectly sopping," said Bill, looking at her drenched feet. They had two drinks, while Bill told how the director had thrown his play out after the cast had been picked over twice, and had gone through three rehearsals. "I said to him, 'I didn't say it was a masterpiece, I said it would make a good show.' And he said, 'It just doesn't *play*, do you see? It needs a doctor.' So I'm stuck, absolutely stuck," said Bill, on the edge of weeping again. "I've been crying," he told her, "in my

1. in one's cups: while drunk.

cups."[1] And he went on to ask her if she realized his wife was ruining him with her extravagance. "I send her ten dollars every week of my unhappy life, and I don't really have to. She threatens to jail me if I don't, but she can't do it. God, let her try it after the way she treated me! She's no right to alimony and she knows it. She keeps on saying she's got to have it for the baby and I keep on sending it because I can't bear to see anybody suffer. So I'm way behind on the piano and the victrola,[2] both—"

"Well, this is a pretty rug, anyhow," she said.

Bill stared at it and blew his nose. "I got it at Ricci's for ninety-five dollars," he said. "Ricci told me it once belonged to Marie Dressler,[3] and cost fifteen hundred dollars, but there's a burnt place on it, under the divan. Can you beat that?"

"No," she said. She was thinking about her empty purse and that she could not possibly expect a check for her latest review for another three days, and her arrangement with the basement restaurant could not last much longer if she did not pay something on account. "It's no time to speak of it," she said, "but I've been hoping you would have by now that fifty dollars you promised for my scene in the third act. Even if it doesn't play. You were to pay me for the work anyhow out of your advance."

"Weeping Jesus," said Bill, "you, too?" He gave a loud sob, or hiccough, in his moist handkerchief. "Your stuff was no better than mine, after all. Think of that."

"But you got something for it," she said. "Seven hundred dollars."

Bill said, "Do me a favor, will you? Have another drink and forget about it. I can't, you know I can't, I would if I could, but you know the fix I'm in."

"Let it go, then," she found herself saying almost in spite of herself. She had meant to be quite firm about it. They drank again without speaking, and she went to her apartment on the floor above.

There, she now remembered distinctly, she had taken the letter out of the purse before she spread the purse out to dry.

She had sat down and read the letter over again: but there were phrases that insisted on being read many times, they had a lift of their own separate from the others, and when she tried to read past and around them, they moved with the movement of her eyes, and she could not escape them . . . "thinking about you more than I mean to. . . yes I even talk about you. . . why were you so anxious to destroy. . . even if I could see you now I would not. . . not worth all this abominable. . . the end. . ."

Carefully she tore the letter into narrow strips and touched a lighted match to them in the coal grate.

Early the next morning she was in the bathtub when the janitress knocked and then came in, calling out that she wished to examine the radiators before she started the furnace going for the winter. After moving about the room for a few minutes, the janitress went out, closing the door very sharply.

She came out of the bathroom to get a cigarette from the package in the purse. The purse was gone. She dressed and made coffee, and sat by the window while she drank it. Certainly the janitress had taken the purse, and certainly it would be impossible to get it back without a great deal of ridiculous excitement. Then let it go. With this decision of her mind, there rose coincidentally in her blood a deep almost murderous anger. She set the cup

2. victrola: phonograph.
3. Marie Dressler: one-time movie star (1868-1934).

carefully in the center of the table, and walked steadily downstairs, three long flights and a short hall and a steep short flight into the basement, where the janitress, her face streaked with coal dust, was shaking up the furnace[4]. "Will you please give me back my purse? There isn't any money in it. It was a present, and I don't want to lose it."

The janitress turned without straightening up and peered at her with hot flickering eyes; a red light from the furnace reflected in them. "What do you mean, your purse?"

"The gold cloth purse you took from the wooden bench in my room," she said. "I must have it back."

"Before God I never laid eyes on your purse, and that's the holy truth," said the janitress.

"Oh, well then, keep it," she said, but in a very bitter voice; "keep it if you want it so much." And she walked away.

She remembered how she had never locked a door in her life, on some principle of rejection in her that made her uncomfortable in the ownership of things, and her paradoxical boast before the warnings of friends, that she had never lost a penny by theft; and she had been pleased with the bleak humility of this concrete example designed to illustrate and justify a certain fixed, otherwise baseless and general faith which ordered the movements of her life without regard to her will in the matter.

In this moment she felt that she had been robbed of an enormous number of valuable things, whether material or intangible: things lost or broken by her own fault, things she had forgotten and left in houses when she moved: books borrowed from her and not returned, journeys she had planned and had not made, words she waited to hear spoken to her and had not heard, and the words she had meant to answer with; bitter alternatives and intolerable substitutes worse than nothing, and yet inescapable: the long patient suffering of dying friendships and the dark inexplicable death of love—all that she had had, and all that she had missed, were lost together, and were twice lost in this landslide of remembered losses.

The janitress was following her upstairs with the purse in her hand and the same deep red fire flickering in her eyes. The janitress thrust the purse towards her while they were still a half dozen steps apart, and said: "Don't never tell on me. I musta been crazy. I get crazy in the head sometimes, I swear I do. My son can tell you."

She took the purse after a moment, and the janitress went on: "I got a niece who is going on seventeen, and she's a nice girl and I thought I'd give it to her. She needs a pretty purse. I musta been crazy; I thought maybe you wouldn't mind, you leave things around and don't seem to notice much."

She said: "I missed this because it was a present to me from someone. . ."

The janitress said: "He'd get you another if you lost this one. My niece is young and needs pretty things, we oughta give the young ones a chance. She's got young men after her maybe will want to marry her. She oughta have nice things. She needs them bad right now. You're a grown woman, you've had your chance, you ought to know how it is!"

She held the purse out to the janitress saying: "You don't know what you're talking about. Here, take it, I've changed my mind. I really don't want it."

The janitress looked up at her with

4 shaking up the furnace: agitating the fire by means of a mechanical device.

hatred and said: "I don't want it either now. My niece is young and pretty, she don't need fixin' up to be pretty, she's young and pretty anyhow! I guess you need it worse than she does!"

"It wasn't really yours in the first place," she said, turning away. "You mustn't talk as if I had stolen it from you."

"It's not from me, it's from her you're stealing it," said the janitress, and went back downstairs.

She laid the purse on the table and sat down with the cup of chilled coffee, and thought: I was right not to be afraid of any thief but myself, who will end by leaving me nothing.

SELECTION II

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

A. **1.** What sort of person is Bill? Do you admire him? Why or why not? What seems to be his profession?

2. Why did the janitress come to the apartment?

3. Is the letter which the heroine tears up important to the plot of the story? Explain.

4. Why do you think Miss Porter begins her story in the middle?

5. When the purse was taken, did the heroine feel that she was being robbed of more than money? Why?

6. What does the janitress mean by the statement, "You're a grown woman, you've had your chance, you ought to know how it is!"? Do agree with this point of view?

7. How does the janitress's attitude change near the end of the story?

8. Does the fact that the heroine is nameless contribute to the effectiveness of the story? Why or why not?

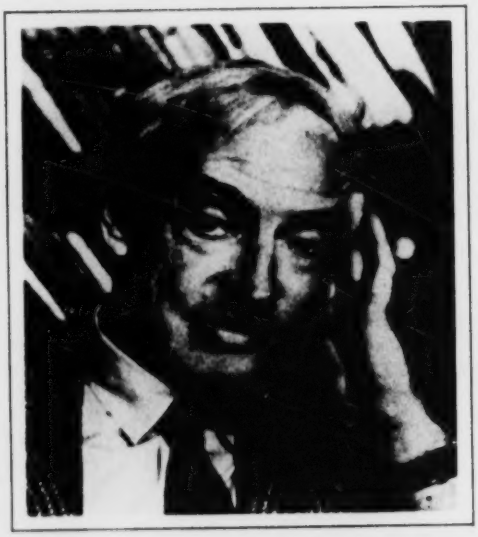
9. Cite examples from the story which illustrate that Miss Porter has a low opinion of men.

B. **1.** Write a description of the heroine, as you conceive of her, giving both her physical attributes as well as those of her personality.

2. The last sentence of the story states: "I was right not to be afraid of any thief but myself, who will end by leaving me nothing." Do you think that the author is expressing a personal philosophy or a general philosophic truth? Discuss this idea in a short written essay of 150-200 words, or use it as the theme for a round-table debate with your classmates.

CHAPTER XXXIII

SAUL BELLOW



Since an early moment in the nineteenth century the writer has felt the obligation not to repeat what has been done before, and to strike some peculiar note of modernity.

. . . . .

Modern fiction has taken it upon itself to show experience as ever-new and ever-valuable. The very form of fiction is that of experience itself. Everything is to be viewed as though for the first time. The representation of things is imperative, for the things of a modern man's life are important. They are important because man's career on this earth is held to be important. Literature has been committed to the importance of this assertion for a long time.

—Quoted in *English Teaching Forum*, July-August 1966, p. 21.

Bellow (1915-) grew up in Chicago after his parents moved from Canada to the United States. Unlike most leading American writers, he not only went to college but did graduate work. In that way he represents the new, more formally educated generation of American writers. He is an intellectual, unusually thoughtful and widely read. He is now a professor at the University of Chicago but his post allows him, out of respect for his reputation as an author, to do whatever teaching he likes. Correspondingly, his most recent novel, *Herzog*, is about a professor, though a less fortunate one than Bellow.

In *The Adventures of Augie March*, the professor-hero has not yet emerged. Augie is a Chicago boy, brought up poor and fatherless, educated chiefly on the streets but also at home, which is a place both of love and discipline. The novel, episode by episode, incident by incident, shows Augie during the Depression, breaking away from his home and making his own way. He does many different jobs and gets something of an education from the textbooks that he steals to sell. He encounters many kinds of men—crooked, honest, rich, and poor. He meets several girls who fall in love with him as he travels through the United States, into Mexico, and on to Europe.

But whatever he does, wherever he goes, he remains his own person. People like him, and want to help him and form lasting relationships with him. A rich couple, for instance, wishes to adopt him even though he is already a young man. A rich girl wants to keep him as a lover. They do not succeed, nor does anyone else. He refuses to be bound.

SELECTION I

In the excerpt from *Augie* reprinted below, we see a meeting between him and his older, highly successful brother Simon. Augie has broken up with his rich mistress of several months and has just come back from Mexico, where he and his mistress have been living. Simon, married into a wealthy family, is arrogant with success. He buys and sells, bullies and pushes. Yet Augie makes him uneasy. Augie has nothing, but he is free. The two brothers have not met for a long time, and the scene shows how they respond to seeing one another again.

The account of the meeting is given in the direct, personal, and vital style which Bellow perfected in *Augie*. It seems almost a speaking style, pungent and vital. Though crammed with particulars, with details of description, the story moves briskly.

The Adventures of Augie March
Chapter 21

Simon did want to see me. As soon as he heard my voice over the phone he said, "Augie! Where are you? Stay put.[1] I'll come and pick you up right away."

I was calling from a booth near my new place, which wasn't far from the old, on the South Side. He lived in the vicinity and was there within a few minutes in his black Cadillac, this beautiful enamel shell coming so softly to the curb, inside like jewelry. He beckoned and I got in. "I have to go right back," he said. "I left without a shirt; I just put on this coat and hat. Well, let's look at you."

He said this, but actually didn't much look, despite his rush to get down. Of course he was driving, but just the touch of manicured hands on the valuable stones on the wheel—something like jade—did the trick. The thing pretty well ran itself. I thought he was sorry about the fight we had had over Lucy and Mimi. I wasn't angry any more but was looking ahead. Simon was heftier than before. The light raglan with its chestnut buttons came open on his hard bare belly. Also his face was larger, and rude, autocratic. The fat of it was not clear, as it is in some faces. Mrs. Klein, Jimmy's mother, had had a fat face, almost oriental, but there the fat illuminated something. However, I found out that I couldn't be critical of Simon when I saw him after a long interval. No matter what he had done or what he was up to[2] now, the instant I saw him I loved him again. I couldn't help it. It came over me. I wanted to be brothers again. And why did he come running for me if he didn't want the same?

Well, now he wanted to know how rugged things had been for me, and I didn't have any intention of telling him. What was I up to in Mexico?

"I was in love with a girl."

"You were, uh? And what else?"

I didn't say anything about the bird[3] or my failures and lessons. Maybe I should have. He criticized me anyway in his mind for my randomness and sentiment. So what did I stand to lose by telling him the facts? However, something haughty kept me. That was how brief the first warmth of love turned out to be. So he was judging me—what of it? Let him. Wasn't I busted down[4], creased, head-damaged, missing teeth, disappointed, and so forth? And couldn't I have said, "Well, all right, Simon, here I am." No, what I told him was that I had gone down to Mexico to work out something important.

Then he started to talk about himself.

1. stay put: remain in one place.

2. was up to: was doing, was occupied with.
3. bird: here, slang for "girl."
4. busted down: slang for "failure."

He had built up his business and sold it at a whopping profit. Since he didn't want to have to do with the Magnuses he had gone into other kinds of business and he was very lucky. He said, "I certainly do have the gold touch. After all, I did start in the Depression when everything was supposed to be over and done with." Then he described how he had bought an old hospital building at auction and turned it into a tenement. Inside of six months he had cleared fifty thousand bucks on this, and then had organized a management company and run the place for the new owners. He had a large interest in a Spanish cobalt mine now. They sold the stuff in Turkey, or some place in the Middle East. He also had a potato-chip concession in several railroad stations. In fact, Einhorn himself couldn't have dreamed up such deals, much less have made them pay off.

"How much do you think I'm worth now?"

"A hundred grand?"

He smiled. "Let yourself go a little," he said. "If I'm not a millionaire soon there's a hitch in my arithmetic."

It impressed me; who wouldn't be impressed? He couldn't help seeing this. Nevertheless, with his autocratic blues eyes darkening, he looked at me and asked, "Augie, you don't think you're superior to me because you have no money, do you?"

The question made me laugh, and maybe I laughed more than I should have. I said, "That's a strange thing to be asking. How can I? And if I can, why should you care?" Then I said, "I guess it's true that people fix it to come out better than those near to them. Why, sure I'd like to have money too."

I didn't say that I had to have a fate good enough, and that this came first.

My answer satisfied him. "You're wasting a lot of time," he said.

"I know it."

"You ought to quit stalling. You're not a boy. Even George is something, he's a shoemaker."

You know, I did admire Georgie for the way he took his fate. I wished I had one that was more evident, and that I could quit this pilgrimage of mine. I didn't feel I was better than Simon, not at all. If there had been real ease in me, he might have envied me. As it was, what was there to envy?

Bodily overbearing, his fashionable pointed shoe on the rubber pad of the accelerator, he drove over the streets. This proud car, it had heraldry, it was royal, and wasn't my brother like a prince of Detroit, full of force and darkness? Why, what was the matter with that, to be a power of the world of machinery? Wasn't it good enough? And to what should you go rather? I wasn't proud of myself, believe me, and my stubbornness about a "higher," independent fate. I was no wizard, for sure, nor gazetted as anything illustrious, nor billed to stand up to Apollyon[5] with his horrible scales and bear's feet, nor slated to find the answer to all my shames like Jean-Jacques[6] on the way to Vincennes sinking down with emotion of the conception that evil society is to blame for all that happened to warm, impulsive, loving me. There was no such first-rate thing that I could boast, and who was I, not to make up my mind and be so obstinate? The one thing I could say was that though I wanted this independent fate it wasn't merely for my own sake I wanted it.

Oh, but why get too earnest? Seriousness is only for a few, a gift or grace, and

5. Apollyon: king of hell and angel of the bottomless pit, i.e., the devil.
6. Jean-Jacques: Rousseau (1712-1778), Swiss-born philosopher and writer.

though all have it rough only the favorites can speak of it plain and sober.

"So when are you going to start what you're going to do?"

"I wish I knew. But it seems to be one of those things you can't rush."

SELECTION I

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

A. 1. Is Simon really glad to see Augie? Explain your answer.

2. What does Simon's question: "Augie, you don't think you're superior to me because you have no money, do you?" reveal about Simon?

3. Augie remarks that Simon is "like a prince of Detroit, full of force and darkness." Do you think he feels that Simon is somewhat satanic in nature? Explain your answer.

4. Do the two March brothers have what you would call a typical brotherly relationship? State your reasons.

B. 1. Augie is obviously a rather independent spirit. Do you feel that society generally prefers conformity in a person and views the strongly individualistic citizen with a distrust bordering on fear? In a short essay or speech, give the reasons for your belief.

2. At the end of this excerpt, Augie observes: "Seriousness is only for a few, a gift or grace, and though all have it rough only the favorites can speak of it plain and sober." What does this observation mean to you? Do you agree or disagree? Why?

SELECTION II

The Adventures of Augie March
Chapter 21 (continued)

"Well, people don't trust you if they don't know what you do, and you can't blame them."

He pulled up before his apartment, and he left the Cadillac triple-parked[1] in the street for the doorman to worry about. Rising up swift and soundless in the elevator, we came to the ivory white door of his flat. As he opened it he was already yelling for the maid to cook some ham and eggs right away. He took on like a king, a Francis[2] back from the hunt; he swelled, hollered, turned things round, not so much showing me the great rooms as dominating them typically. Well, there were vast rugs and table lamps as tall as lifesized dolls or female idols, walls that were all mahogany, drawers full of underwear and shirts, sliding doors that opened on racks of shoes, on rows of coats, cases of gloves, of socks, bottles of eau de cologne, little caskets, lights lining the corners, water hissing criss-cross in the showerstall. He took a shower. I went alone into the parlor; a huge China vase was there, and in secret I got up on a chair to lift the lid and look down, where I saw the reverse white bulge of the dragons and birds. The candy dishes were full of candy—I had some coconut balls and apricot marshmallows walking around while Simon took his shower. Then we went to eat, on a hand-

1. triple-parked: of an automobile, parked (usually unlawfully) alongside two other automobiles, one of which is properly parked parallel to the curb.

2. Francis: King Francis I of France (reigned 1515-1547).

some marble-topped round table. The chairs were red leather. The metal circle that held up the marble was worked all around with peacocks and children's faces. The maid came from the blazing white of the kitchen with the ham and eggs and coffee. Simon's hand with its rings went out to test the heat of the cup. He behaved like some Italian Lord Moltocurante,[3] jealous over the quality and exacting all he had coming.

I knew we had gone way up in the elevator but hadn't noticed to what floor. Now, after breakfast, when I strayed into one of the enormous carpeted rooms, dark as a Pullman when it sits with drawn blinds in the station, I drew a drape aside and saw we were on the twentieth story at least. I hadn't had a look at Chicago yet since my return. Well, here it was again, westward from this window, the gray snarled city with the hard black straps of rails, enormous industry cooking and its vapor shuddering to the air, the climb and fall of its stages in construction or demolition like mesas, and on these the different powers and sub-powers crouched and watched like sphinxes. Terrible dumbness covered it, like a judgment that would never find its word.

Simon came looking for me. He cried, "Hey, what the hell are you doing in a dark room, for Chrissake? Come on, you're going around with me today."

He wanted me to know what his life was like. And maybe he thought I'd run into something that would appeal to me, for my future's sake. "Wait a minute though," he said. "What kind of clown's suit are you wearing there? You can't go among people dressed like that."

"Listen, a friend of mine picked this out for me. Anyway, just feel the material. There's nothing wrong with this suit."

But this face was impatient, and he pulled the jacket from me and said, "Strip!" He dressed me in a double-breasted flannel, very elegant soft gray. It certainly was my fortune to be poor in style. From the skin out he reclothed me in swell linen and silk socks, new shoes, and called the maid to have my old suit cleaned and sent to me—it was sort of shiny on the elbows. The other stuff he ordered her to throw down the incinerator. So it plunged down into the fire. I wiped my face with the monogrammed handkerchief, now mine, and felt around with my toes in the narrow shoes, trying to accustom myself to them. To top it off he gave me fifty bucks. I made efforts to refuse this, but my tongue got in its own way. "Go! Stop mumbling," he said. "You have to have a little something in your pocket to live up to this outfit." He had a big gold money-clip and all the bills were new. "Now let's go. I have things to do at my office and Charlotte wants to be picked up at five. She's at the accountant's, going over some of the books." He called down for the Cadillac, and we drove away, stopping for scarcely anything in this lustrous hard shell with radio playing.

In his office Simon wore his hat like a Member of Parliament, and while he phoned his alligator-skin shoes knocked things off the desk. He was in on a deal[4] to buy some macaroni in Brazil and sell it in Helsinki. Then he was interested in some mining machinery from Sudbury, Ontario, that was wanted by an Indo-Chinese company. The nephew of a Cabinet member came in with a proposition about waterproof material. And after him some sharp

3. Lord Moltocurante: the author's fanciful term for one who affects aristocratic attitudes and manners.

4. in on a deal: involved in a transaction, usually financial.

character interested Simon in distressed[5] yard-goods[6] from Muncie, Indiana. He bought it. Then he sold it as lining to a manufacturer of leather jackets. All this while he carried on over the phone and cursed and bullied, but that was just style, not anger, for he laughed often.

Then we drove to his club for lunch, arriving late. There was no service in the dining room. Simon went into the kitchen to bawl out[7] the headwaiter. Seeing some pot roast on a platter he broke off a piece of bread and sopped the gravy, covering the meat with crumbs. The waiter hollered and Simon yelled back, furiously laughing in his face too. "Why don't you wait on people then, you jerk!"

Finally they fed us, and then Simon seemed to find the afternoon dragging.

We went into the cardroom where he forced his way into a poker game. I could tell he was hated, but no one could stand up to him. He said to some bald-headed guy, "Push over, Curly!" and sat in. "This is my brother," he said as if bidding them to look at me in the opulent gray flannel and button-down collar. I lounged just behind him in a leather chair. . .

5. distressed: here, seized and held as security or indemnity for a debt.
6. yard-goods: cloth which is sold by the yard (3 feet).
7. bawl out: scold or reprimand loudly.

SELECTION II

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

A. 1. How does Simon act when he gets to his apartment? Do you expect this of him?

2. Why did he make Augie put on other clothes? What does this reveal about Simon's character?

3. What does Simon do for a living? Do you think he likes his job? Explain.

4. How does Bellow want us to feel about Simon and Augie?

B. 1. In a composition of about 200-250 words, compare Bellow's style with that of Faulkner or Hemingway.

2. What writer in your national literature uses themes similar to those of Bellow? Prepare a short speech in which you make this comparison.

CHAPTER XXXIV

RALPH ELLISON

I am a novelist, not an activist. But I think that no one who reads what I write or who listens to my lectures can doubt that I am enlisted in the freedom movement. As to the individual, I am primarily responsible for the health of American literature and culture. When I write, I am trying to make some sense out of chaos. To think that a writer must think about his Negroness is to fall into a trap.

—Quoted in *The New York Times Magazine*, November 20, 1966

America belongs to everyone who loves it. Each must live his life and understand it, and be responsible for his own conscience. The way home we each seek is that condition of man's being at home in the world which is called love, and which we term democracy.

—Quoted in *Mirror*, February 20, 1953

Ralph Ellison (1914—) was born in Oklahoma. He has seen many sides of Negro life and has put the essence of them into his outstanding novel, *Invisible Man*. Though it was published in 1952, it is still timely.

The characters are strongly if simply drawn. They are often types, often exaggerations, but they stay in the reader's mind. There is the Negro president of the college the young hero attends, a shrewd, classic "Uncle Tom[1]," using both white and black men for his own benefit. There is the bigoted Southern businessman and his opposite number[2] in the North. There is the young Negro idealist who is killed because of his idealism. There is the Black Nationalist leader, Ras the Exhorter, a kind of leader later to become much more important on the American scene. There is the Communist official in Harlem, using the Negro to help the aims of the Party, and a gallery of others, black and white.

The nameless hero, the *Invisible Man*, meets all these characters in the course of the book. A few treat him well. Most treat him badly. Many ignore him. They never see him as a person. That is why at the end of the book he retreats to complete invisibility. No one can see him in his cellar except himself.

Ellison tells his story with an intensity that hits the reader hard. In the first chapter of the book, from which an excerpt is reprinted below, the Invisible Man tells us what it means to be invisible and what he

1. Uncle Tom: term applied to Negroes whose behavior towards whites is regarded as fawning or servile.
2. opposite number: a person having a rank, position, or function comparable with that of another in a different situation or organization.

has done in his desperate effort to cope with the problem.

SELECTION 1

from Invisible Man

Chapter 1

One night I accidentally bumped into a man, and perhaps because of the near darkness he saw me and called me an insulting name. I sprang at him, seized his coat lapels and demanded that he apologize. He was a tall blond man, and as my face came close to his he looked insolently out of his blue eyes and cursed me, his breath hot in my face as he struggled. I pulled his chin down sharp upon the crown of my head, butting him as I had seen the West Indians do, and I felt his flesh tear and the blood gush out, and I yelled, "Apologize! Apologize!" But he continued to curse and struggle, and I butted him again and again until he went down heavily, on his knees, profusely bleeding. I kicked him repeatedly, in a frenzy because he still uttered insults though his lips were frothy with blood. Oh yes, I kicked him! And in my outrage I got out my knife and prepared to slit his throat, right there beneath the lamplight in the deserted street, holding him by the collar with one hand, and opening the knife with my teeth—when it occurred to me that the man had not *seen* me, actually; that he, as far as he knew, was in the midst of a walking nightmare! And I stopped the blade, slicing the air as I pushed him away, letting him fall back to the street. I stared at him hard as the lights of a car stabbed through the darkness. He lay there, moaning on the asphalt; a man almost killed by a phantom. It unnerved me. I was both disgusted and ashamed. I was like a drunken man myself, wavering about on weakened legs. Then I was amused. Something in this man's thick head had sprung out and beaten him within an inch of his life. I began to laugh at this crazy discovery. Would he have awakened at the point of death? Would Death himself have freed him for wakeful living? But I didn't linger. I ran away into the dark, laughing so hard I feared I might rupture myself. The next day I saw his picture in the *Daily News*, beneath a caption stating that he had been "mugged[1]." Poor fool, poor blind fool, I thought with sincere compassion, mugged by an invisible man!

Most of the time (although I do not choose as I once did to deny the violence of my days by ignoring it) I am not so overtly violent. I remember that I am invisible and walk softly so as not to awaken the sleeping ones. Sometimes it is best not to awaken them; there are few things in the world as dangerous as sleepwalkers. I learned in time though that it is possible to carry on a fight against them without their realizing it. For instance, I have been carrying on a fight with Monopolated Light & Power for some time now. I use their service and pay them nothing at all, and they don't know it. Oh, they suspect that power is being drained off, but they don't know where. All they know is that according to the master meter back there in their power station a hell of a lot of free current is disappearing somewhere into the jungle of Harlem. The joke, of course, is that I don't live in Harlem but in a border area. Several years ago (before I discovered the advantage of being invisible) I went through the routine process of buying service and paying their outrageous rates. But no more. I gave up all that, along with my apartment, and my old way of life: That way based upon the

1. mugged: (slang) assaulted and robbed.

fallacious assumption that I, like other men, was visible. Now, aware of my invisibility, I live rent-free in a building rented strictly to whites, in a section of the basement that was shut off and forgotten during the nineteenth century, which I discovered when I was trying to escape in the night from Ras the Destroyer. But that's getting too far ahead of the story, almost to the end, although the end is in the beginning and lies far ahead.

The point now is that I found a home—or a hole in the ground, as you will. Now don't jump to the conclusion that because I call my home a "hole" it is damp and cold like a grave; there are cold holes and warm holes. Mine is a warm hole. And remember, a bear retires to his hole for the winter and lives until spring; then he comes strolling out like the Easter chick breaking from its shell. I say all this to assure you that it is incorrect to assume that, because I'm invisible and live in a hole, I am dead. I am neither dead nor in a state of suspended animation. Call me Jack-the-Bear, for I am in a state of hibernation.

My hole is warm and full of light. Yes, *full* of light. I doubt if there is a brighter spot in all New York than this hole of mine, and I do not exclude Broadway. Or the Empire State Building on a photographer's dream night. But that is taking advantage of you. Those two spots are among the darkest of our whole civilization—pardon me, our whole *culture* (an important distinction, I've heard)—which might sound like a hoax, or a contradiction, but that (by contradiction, I mean) is how the world moves: Not like an arrow, but a boomerang. (Beware of those who speak of the *spiral* of history; they are preparing a boomerang. Keep a steel helmet handy.) I know; I have been boomeranged across my head so much that I now can see the darkness of lightness. And I love light. Perhaps you'll think it strange that an invisible man should need light, desire light, love light. But maybe it is exactly because I *am* invisible. Light confirms my reality, gives birth to my form. A beautiful girl once told me of a recurring nightmare in which she lay in the center of a large dark room and felt her face expand until it filled the whole room, becoming a formless mass while her eyes ran in bilious jelly up the chimney. And so it is with me. Without light I am not only invisible, but formless as well; and to be unaware of one's form is to live a death. I myself, after existing some twenty years, did not become alive until I discovered my invisibility.

That is why I fight my battle with Monopolated Light & Power. The deeper reason, I mean: It allows me to feel my vital aliveness. I also fight them for taking so much of my money before I learned to protect myself. In my hole in the basement there are exactly 1,369 lights. I've wired the entire ceiling, every inch of it. And not with fluorescent bulbs, but with the older, more-expensive-to-operate kind, the filament type. An act of sabotage, you know. I've already begun to wire the wall. A junk man I know, a man of vision, has supplied me with wire and sockets. Nothing, storm or flood, must get in the way of our need for light and ever more and brighter light. The truth is the light and light is the truth. When I finish all four walls, then I'll start on the floor. Just how that will go, I don't know. Yet when you have lived invisible as long as I have you develop a certain ingenuity. I'll solve the problem. And maybe I'll invent a gadget to place my coffeepot on the fire while I lie in bed, and even invent a gadget to warm my bed—like the fellow I saw in one of the picture magazines who made himself a gadget to warm his shoes! Though invisible, I am in

the great American tradition of tinkers. That makes me kin to Ford[2], Edison[3] and Franklin[4]. Call me, since I have a theory and a concept, a "thinker-tinker." Yes, I'll warm my shoes; they need it, they're usually full of holes. I'll do that and more.

Now I have one radio-phonograph; I plan to have five. There is a certain acoustical deadness in my hole, and when I have music I want to *feel* its vibration, not only with my ear but with my whole body. I'd like to hear five recordings of Louis Armstrong[5] playing and singing "What Did I Do to Be so Black and Blue"—all at the same time. Sometimes now I listen to Louis while I have my favorite dessert of vanilla ice cream and sloe gin. I pour the red liquid over the white mound, watching it glisten and the vapor rising as Louis bends that military instrument into a beam of lyrical sound. Perhaps I like Louis Armstrong because he's made poetry out of being invisible. I think it must be because he's unaware that he *is* invisible. And my own grasp of invisibility aids me to understand his music. Once when I asked for a cigarette, some jokers gave me a reefer[6], which I lighted when I got home and sat listening to my phonograph. It was a strange evening. Invisibility, let me explain, gives one a slightly different sense of time, you're never quite on the beat. Sometimes you're ahead and sometimes behind. Instead of the swift and imperceptible flowing of time, you are aware of its nodes, those points where time stands still or from which it leaps ahead. And you slip into the breaks and look around. That's what you hear vaguely in Louis' music. . .

2. Ford: Henry Ford (1863-1947), American automobile manufacturer.
3. Edison: Thomas A. Edison (1847-1931), American inventor.
4. Franklin: Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790), American statesman, writer, and inventor.
5. Louis Armstrong: famous American jazz musician (1900-1971).
6. reefer: (slang) marijuana cigarette.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

A. 1. Why does the narrator in this excerpt attack the other man?

2. Why does he stop short of slitting the other man's throat with his knife?

3. What does the narrator mean when he says he suddenly realized that the white man did not see him?

4. What was his first reaction to this realization? His second reaction?

5. Explain the meaning of these words: "Something in this man's thick head had sprung out and beaten him within an inch of his life."

6. Are bursts of violence usual with the narrator?

7. How does he customarily handle his "invisibility"? Why?

8. Why is it appropriate philosophically that the narrator live rent-free?

9. Why is it so necessary to him that his cellar home be full of light?

10. What does he mean when he says he can see the darkness of lightness? What outwardly light places does he say are the darkest parts of American culture? What does he mean by this?

11. Why does the narrator refer to the junk man who is supplying him with wire and

sockets as "a man of vision"? Do you think this reference has meaning on more than one level of interpretation?

12. In what way does the narrator say he is like his invisible compatriots?

13. Why does he say Louis Armstrong was able to make poetry out of being invisible?

14. How is an invisible person's sense of time different from that of a visible person?

15. How does his sense of time help the narrator to understand Armstrong's music?

B. 1. Is race the only criterion that society uses to make a person invisible? Explain.

2. The narrative in this excerpt is given as a soliloquy. Is there an advantage to this type of presentation considering the nature of the novel?

CHAPTER XXXV

ROBERT LOWELL
THEODORE ROETHKE
RANDALL JARRELL
JAMES WRIGHT

SOME CONTEMPORARY POETIC VOICES

Sincerity and a fascination with oppositions are among the most representative themes of the contemporary writer. These can be reflected in the poet's temperament as well as in his choice of subject matter. An intense awareness of the difference between appearance and fact, seeming and being, the superficial and the essential, in idea, is matched by a bold sometimes daring use of oppositions, of unexpected juxtapositions, in form.

—*English Teaching Forum*, January-February 1971, p. 12

Robert Lowell (1917-1977)

Of the many poets writing in the United States in recent years one of the most outstanding was Robert Lowell. Related as he was to such earlier American poets as Amy Lowell and James Russell Lowell, Robert Lowell came by his interest in poetry naturally. His first book of poems, *Land of Unlikeness*, was published in 1944. From this volume he selected the best poems, which he reworked and published as *Lord Weary's Castle*. This collection won the Pulitzer Prize in 1946. Other volumes of his poetry are: *The Mills of the Kavanaughs* (1951), *Life Studies* (1959), and *For the Union Dead* (1964). Lowell taught at a number of schools, including Kenyon College, Boston University, and Harvard.

Lowell's earlier poems, especially those that appeared in *Lord Weary's Castle*, represented an involvement with the traditions of the poets of the generation of T. S. Eliot and Allen Tate. However, in both subject matter and language, his later poems seem a departure from these traditions and assume a more contemporary posture. Because of his early traditional approach and later divergence, Lowell was one of the most transitional of contemporary American poets.

Perhaps the chief characteristic of Lowell's poetry is its vitality. He never overelaborates about a feeling or thought just so that it will fill a poem, but instead packs the lines he writes with exuberant energy. Sometimes he may prove difficult to understand, yet he is not one who loves obscurity for its own sake. His rhyme and

rhythm are regular, and the beat of his verses is strong; we can feel the pulse in them. When one of his rhymes is off or a rhythm is wrenched, it is for a poetic purpose.

SELECTION 1

"Katherine's Dream," reprinted here, is one of a group of four poems called "Between the Porch and the Altar," found in the larger work, *Lord Weary's Castle*. Katherine is the mistress of a man who, despite his love for her, cannot put his wife and two children out of his thoughts. To complicate the affair further, Katherine's father is being driven to drink because of her illicit love affair. The two lovers sin but not without grief, tension, and regret.

Three of the four poems are written from the viewpoint of the man, but in "Katherine's Dream" the woman is the speaker. We find her alone, full of remorse and penitence in the yard of St. Patrick's Church. Though she wants some relief from her feeling of guilt, Katherine cannot bring herself to enter the church to make her confession. She cries and asks God's forgiveness for her sin, but never succeeds in entering the confessional as other penitents are doing. Without her lover's presence to bolster her courage and without him to share in the church's ritual of asking for and receiving God's pardon, she finds herself even more alone and abandoned. In her dream she seems to be locked into her adultery. And though it is all a dream, the poet makes us realize that it is a symbol of reality, too.

Although Lowell was converted to Catholicism in 1940, in his writings he has often been bent on probing his Puritan past and exploring the burden of guilt that has always haunted the New England mind (much in the manner of Hawthorne before him). In many ways his sympathies have been engaged by the ancestral Calvinistic views of man and the world. In "Katherine's Dream" Lowell expresses the ancient idea that the wages of sin are to be paid in this world as well as in the next.

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from LORD WEARY'S CASTLE

KATHERINE'S DREAM

It must have been a Friday. I could hear
The top-floor typist's thunder and the beer
That you had brought in cases hurt my head;
I'd sent the pillows flying from my bed,
I hugged my knees together and I gasped.
The dangling telephone receiver rasped
Like someone in a dream who cannot stop
For breath or logic till his victim drop
To darkness and the sheets. I must have slept,
But still could hear my father who had kept
Your guilty presents but cut off my hair.
He whispers that he really doesn't care
If I am your kept woman all my life,
Or ruin your two children and your wife;
But my dishonor makes him drink. Of course
I'll tell the court the truth for his divorce.

I walk through snow into. St. Patrick's yard.
Black nuns with glasses smile and stand on guard
Before a bulkhead in a bank of snow,
Whose charred doors open, as good people go
Inside by twos to the confessor. One
Must have a friend to enter there, but none
Is friendless in this crowd, and the nuns smile.
I stand aside and marvel; for a while
The winter sun is pleasant and it warms
My heart with love for others, but the swarms
Of penitents have dwindled. I begin
To cry and ask God's pardon for our sin.
Where are you? You were with me and are gone.
All the forgiven couples hurry on
To dinner and their nights, and none will stop.
I run about in circles till I drop
Against a padlocked bulkhead in a yard
Where faces redden and the snow is hard.

SELECTION II

"I want the reader of my poems to say, this is true," Lowell observed in a recent magazine interview. In "The Drinker" he succeeds in arousing unanimous agreement in his readers as to the truth of the sordid scene which he has so vividly portrayed. It is a tragedy too commonly witnessed in contemporary society. Like the empty whiskey bottle which he has thrown into the river, and which, cork and all, has been sucked under, the subject of the poem has been pulled under by the harsh current of life. And like Katherine in the preceding poem, he, too, is paying the wages of sin in this world.

THE DRINKER

The man is killing time—there's nothing else.
No help now from the fifth of Bourbon[1]
chucked helter-skelter into the river,
even its cork sucked under.

Stubbed before-breakfast cigarettes
burn bull's-eyes on the bedside table;
a plastic tumbler of alka seltzer[2]
champagnes[3] in the bathroom.

No help from his body, the whale's
warm-hearted blubber, foundering down
leagues of ocean, gasping whiteness.
The barbed hooks fester. The lines snap tight.

When he looks for neighbors, their names blur in the window,
his distracted eyes see only glass sky.
His despair has the galvanized color
of the mop and water in the galvanized bucket.

Once she was close to him
as water to the dead metal.
He looks at her engagements inked on her calendar.
A list of indictments.
At the numbers in her thumbed black telephone book.
A quiver full of arrows.

Her absence hisses like steam,
the pipes sing. . .
even corroded metal somehow functions.
He snores in his iron lung,
and hears the voice of Eve,
beseeching freedom from the Garden's
perfect and ponderous bubble. No voice
outsings the serpent's flawed, euphoric hiss.

The cheese wilts in the rat-trap,
the milk turns to junket in the cornflakes bowl,
car keys and razor blades
shine in an ashtray.

Is he killing time? Out on the street,
two cops on horseback clop through the April rain
to check the parking meter violations—
their oilskins yellow as forsythia.

1. Bourbon: whiskey made from corn (maize), originally produced in Bourbon County, Kentucky.
2. Alka Seltzer: effervescent commercial preparation for the relief of gastric discomfort.
3. champagnes: forms bubbles (like champagne).

SELECTIONS I and II

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Katherine's Dream

A. 1. How do the first nine lines provide an effective contrast with the mood of the remainder of the poem?

2. What kind of man do you imagine Katherine's father to be?

3. Do you feel sympathy or pity for Katherine? Explain your answer.
4. Explain the meaning of the line: "Of course/I'll tell the court the truth for his divorce."
5. What kind of relationship exists between the father and the daughter?
6. Would you say that this is a religious poem? Explain.
7. Do you think Katherine would have gone into the confessional if her lover had been with her? Discuss.

B. 1. Do you agree with Lowell's implication that our sins are paid for in this world as well as the next? Debate this question with your classmates.
2. What modern poets in your national literature compare with Lowell in style and subject matter?

The Drinker

1. What word-pictures does the poet use to intensify the morbidness of the scene?
2. To what does the poet compare the physical manifestations of the hangover which the drinker is suffering through? Why is this a particularly effective comparison?
3. What does the fourth stanza tell us about the drinker's personal life?
4. The last stanza begins with a question: "Is he killing time?" How would you answer this question?
5. What is the principal tragedy depicted in the poem?
6. What is the purpose of the last three and one-half lines?
7. What feeling toward the drinker is aroused in you—sympathy, pity, disdain, anger, indifference? Explain your answer.

Theodore Roethke (1908-1963)

Theodore Roethke grew up in Saginaw, Michigan, where in his spare time he helped his father in the family's florist business. By working with plants and flowers he developed a love of nature which was reflected in his first book of poems, *Open House*, published in 1941. After graduating from the University of Michigan and Harvard, Roethke taught in a number of universities and, like many contemporary poets, he continued to write poetry while teaching. His volume of poetry, *The Waking: Poems 1933-1953* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1953, and his collected poems, *Words For The Wind*, won the National Book Award in 1959. His last volume, *The Far Field*, was awarded the same prize in 1964 posthumously.

Roethke's work has been called "personal, lyrical, and spontaneous." He has been highly praised by contemporary critics, some of whom consider him to have been one of the three or four best poets writing in the United States at mid-century. Of himself Roethke has said: "I have a genuine love of nature. . . . A perception of nature—no matter how delicate, how subtle, how evanescent—remains with me forever." His poems about natural subjects are, however, not simply "nature poems"

in the objective sense. Rather, they mirror the poet's own inner struggles—the alternate heights and depths of his emotion. An extremely skillful technician, Roethke manipulated rhyme and rhythm with such competence that the reader often senses the meaning of a poem emotionally before he has grasped it intellectually.

Contrary to many contemporary poets who display feelings of alienation and abandonment and who search for deeper sources of feeling and knowledge, Roethke succeeded in facing up to the terrors of modern life by expressing a kind of joyful defiance:

> We think by feeling. What is there to know?
> I hear my being dance from ear to ear.
> I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.

Selection I

NIGHT JOURNEY

Now as the train bears west,
Its rhythm rocks the earth,
And from my Pullman berth
I stare into the night
While others take their rest.
Bridges or iron lace,
A suddenness of trees,
A lap of mountain mist
All cross my line of sight,
Then a bleak wasted place,
And a lake below my knees.
Full on my neck I feel
The straining at a curve;
My muscles move with steel,
I wake in every nerve.
I watch a beacon swing
From dark to blazing bright;
We thunder through ravines
And gullies washed with light.
Beyond the mountain pass
Mist deepens on the pane;
We rush into a rain
That rattles double glass.
Wheels shake the roadbed stone,
The pistons jerk and shove,
I stay up half the night
To see the land I love.

Selection II

THE WAKING

I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.
I feel my fate in what I cannot fear.
I learn by going where I have to go.

We think by feeling. What is there to know?
I hear my being dance from ear to ear.
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.

Of those so close beside me, which are you?
God bless the Ground! I shall walk softly there,
And learn by going where I have to go.

Light takes the Tree; but who can tell us how?
The lowly worm climbs up a winding stair;
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.

Great Nature has another thing to do
To you and me; so take the lively air,
And, lovely, learn by going where to go.

This shaking keeps me steady. I should know.
What falls away is always. And is near.
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.
I learn by going where I have to go.

SELECTIONS I & II

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Night Journey

1. This poem describes the United States as seen from a Pullman berth on a train. What lines convey the idea of the speed of the train? The sense of the movement of the train?

2. What poetic devices contribute to the melodic quality of the poem? How does the poet achieve the sense of the kaleidoscopic view one has from the windows of a moving train?

3. Compare Roethke's poetic style with Robert Lowell's.

The Waking

1. What images of life and death does the poet convey? Of time and eternity?
2. What is the meaning of the second line of the first stanza?
3. The statements in the poem seem disconnected rather than logically consecutive. Is this characteristic related to the thought content? Do you think the poem is coherent or incoherent? Give your reasons.
4. What are the paradoxes stated in the poem? Are they appropriate? Explain.
5. Do you think the poet's counsel of learning where to go is a good one? Give your reasons.
6. Is the general tone of the poem positive or negative? Explain your answer.

Randall Jarrell (1914-1965)

Randall Jarrell was reared in Nashville, Tennessee, and graduated from Vanderbilt University there. After graduation, he taught at colleges and universities scattered from Texas to New York and also at the Salzburg (Austria) Seminar in American Civilization. During World War II he helped to train airplane crews for the United States Army Air Force at a base in Arizona. He served one year as literary editor of the magazine, *The Nation*. From 1956 to 1958 he was Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress.

Jarrell was one of a number of younger poets who first gained attention for his war poems. A prolific writer, he published several volumes of poetry, including *The Woman at the Washington Zoo*, which won the National Book Award in 1961, and he also wrote critical essays, short stories, and a novel. In his poems, especially those written after World War II, one encounters an air of fantasy, a certain dreamlike quality, apparent in "The Breath of Night," which is printed below.

Called "one of the most gifted poets and critics of his generation," Jarrell was the recipient of a number of literary prizes for his poetry and was widely known for his writings as editor and critic of contemporary poetry. Of him, writer Philip Booth has said that Jarrell "constantly stretched himself to find a language commensurate with his affectionate sadness for the human condition." Another poet, Stanley Kunitz, has pointed out that "all the voices in all of Jarrell's poems are crying 'Change me!' The young yearn to be old in order to escape from their nocturnal fears; the old long for the time of their youth, no matter how poor and miserable it was, for 'in those days everything was better.'"

Selection I

THE BREATH OF NIGHT

The moon rises. The red cubs rolling
In the ferns by the rotten oak
Stare over a marsh and a meadow
To the farm's white wisp of smoke.

256

A spark burns, high in heaven.
Deer thread the blossoming rows
Of the old orchard, rabbits
Hop by the well-curb. The cock crows

From the tree by the widow's walk[1];
Two stars, in the trees to the west,
Are snared, and an owl's soft cry
Runs like a breath through the forest.

Here too, though death is hushed, though joy
Obscures, like night, their wars,
The beings of this world are swept
By the Strife that moves the stars.

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1 "widow's walk" in New England, the name of an elevated vantage point on a dwelling, from which one could have a clear view of the sea.

Selection II

IN THOSE DAYS

In those days—they were long ago—
The snow was cold, the night was black.
I licked from my cracked lips
A snowflake, as I looked back

Through branches, the last uneasy snow.
Your shadow, there in the light, was still.
In a little the light went out.
I went on, stumbling—till at last the hill

Hid the house. And, yawning,
In bed in my room, alone,
I would look out: over the quilted
Rooftops, the clear stars shone.

How poor and miserable we were.
How seldom together!
And yet after so long one thinks:
In those days everything was better.

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SELECTIONS I & II

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The Breath of Night

1. What time of year is described in the first three stanzas? What mood or feeling do these stanzas evoke in the reader? Give examples of poetic images used to create this mood or feeling.
2. Explain the meaning of the last stanza. What purpose do the words, "Here too," serve?
3. What relationship does the poet establish between the idea developed in the last stanza and the atmosphere he creates in the first three?

In Those Days

1. What atmosphere does the poet create in the first three stanzas?
2. Who is the "you," do you think, referred to in line 2 of the second stanza? Give your reasons.
3. This poem is an example of the way poetry can be made out of the way people speak, yet it retains a poetic unity. How does the poet succeed in keeping these lines from being a piece of prose?
4. Is it generally true that the sharing of suffering or hardships brings people closer together? Discuss.
5. Who is the "we" of the last stanza? Why do you think the poet reaches the conclusion that everything was better "in those days"? Does the past look better in retrospect only to older people or do the young also share this feeling? Explain your answer.
6. Does man, by nature, tend not to appreciate the present moment to the fullest extent possible? Give reasons to support your answer.

James Wright (1927-1980)

The youngest poet represented in this chapter, James Wright was born in Martins Ferry, Ohio. After graduating from Kenyon College, he spent a year in Vienna as a Fulbright scholar. He received his M. A. and Ph. D. degrees from the University of Washington and taught English at Hunter College in New York.

Among the many honors Wright won for his poems are the Robert Frost Poetry Prize, the memorial prize from *Poetry* magazine, the *Kenyon Review* poetry fellowship, and a grant from the National Institute of Arts and Letters. His first book of poetry, *The Green Wall*, was published by Yale University as the first of its series of volumes by promising new poets.

Critics have compared Wright's poetry to that of Edwin Arlington Robinson and Robert Frost. Like these older poets, he most often uses both rhyme and conventional meter and the simple language in which he states his ideas. He views humanity with compassion and understanding, one example of which we may see in his poem, "Mutterings Over The Crib Of A Deaf Child." In "A Blessing," Wright articulates a lyricism of pure joy.

Selection I

MUTTERINGS OVER THE CRIB OF A DEAF CHILD

"How will he hear the bell at school,
Arrange the broken afternoon,
And know how to run across the cool
Grasses where the starlings cry,
Or understand the day is gone?"

Well, someone lifting curious brows
Will take the measure of the clock,
And he will see the birchen boughs
Outside sagging dark from the sky,
And the shade crawling upon the rock.

"And how will he know to rise at morning?
His mother has other sons to waken,
She has the stove she must build to burning
Before the coals of the nighttime die;
And he never stirs when he is shaken."

I take it the air affects the skin,
And you remember, when you were young,
Sometimes you could feel the dawn begin,
And the fire would call you, by and by,
Out of the bed and bring you along.

"Well, good enough. To serve his needs
All kinds of arrangements can be made.
But what will you do if his finger bleeds?
Or a bobwhite whistles invisibly
And flutes like an angel off in the shade?"

He will learn pain. And, as for the bird,
It is always darkening when that comes out.
I will putter as though I had not heard,
And lift him into my arms and sing
Whether he hears my song or not.

Selection II

A BLESSING

Just off the highway to Rochester, Minnesota,
Twilight bounds softly forth on the grass.
And the eyes of those two Indian ponies
Darken with kindness.
They have come gladly out of the willows
To welcome my friend and me.
We step over the barbed wire into the pasture
Where they have been grazing all day, alone.
They ripple tensely, they can hardly contain their happiness
That we have come.
They bow shyly as wet swans. They love each other.
There is no loneliness like theirs.
At home once more,
They begin munching the young tufts of spring in the darkness.
I would like to hold the slenderer one in my arms,
For she has walked over to me
And nuzzled my left hand.
She is black and white,
Her mane falls wild on her forehead,
And the light breeze moves me to caress her long ear
That is delicate as the skin over a girl's wrist.
Suddenly I realize
That if I stepped out of my body I would break
Into blossom.

SELECTIONS I & II

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Mutterings Over The Crib of a Deaf Child

1. How many persons are speaking in the poem? Give reasons for your answer.

2. What particular problem for the deaf child is raised in stanza 1? in stanza 3? How are the problems solved?

3. In what way are the problems posed in stanza 5 different from those mentioned in stanzas 1 and 3? Is there a solution to these problems? Explain your answer.

4. How does the poet show his compassion in this poem?

5. Is the poem overly sentimental? Explain.

6. Does the poet's use of the language of ordinary speech and natural word order add to the effectiveness of the poem? Give reasons for your answer.

A Blessing

1. What does the poet mean by saying that "There is no loneliness like theirs"?

2. This poem uses none of the traditional devices of lyric poetry, i.e., rhyme, metronomic meter, yet it has a distinctly lyric quality. How do you explain this?

3. What do you think the poet means by the last two lines of the poem?

Drama was the last of the literary types to which American writers have made a significant contribution, and this only in the last fifty or sixty years with appearance of the works of such playwrights as Edward Albee, Arthur Miller, Eugene O'Neill, Robert E. Sherwood, Neil Simon, Thornton Wilder, and Tennessee Williams.

Colonial Americans enjoyed plays and even the Puritans attended dramas called "moral dialogues." In the American South both Charleston, South Carolina and Williamsburg, Virginia had active theaters many years before the Revolutionary War. New York and Philadelphia had theatrical centers in the 18th century. During the period of westward expansion, traveling companies of actors went by stagecoach and canal or river boats to carry plays to the pioneering settlers. Some acting companies built theaters on river boats called "showboats," which moved up and down such rivers as the Ohio and the Mississippi, giving theatrical presentations at larger towns and cities along the way. The advent of the railroads brought even closer ties between the geographical regions and soon nearly every town had its "opera house" where shows played during the "season."

As years passed, the "opera houses" were converted into motion picture theaters as Hollywood began to produce film dramas which nearly everyone could afford to see and which were easily accessible to the general public. The radio soon brought radio plays directly into the home, and, within a few more years, television brought the magic of live drama before the eyes of millions of avid viewers. Today, not only are movies and television adaptations of famous Broadway plays being presented on the television screen, but also a new and growing field of drama has sprung up—the television play, one written especially for television production.

Both radio and television, because of the time and space limits of each medium, were fertile ground for the development of the short drama, the one-act play. Although the one-act play has been a popular form of entertainment in America for more than 60 years, and literally thousands have been written and produced in schools, colleges, civic and community theaters, and professional theaters, radio and television drama helped to form a new breed of one-act play dramatists.

Historically, in 1915, the Washington Square Players (who eventually became the world-famous Theatre Guild) chose three one-act plays for their first public performance at the Bandbox Theater in New York City. In the first three years of their history, the Washington Square Players performed 62 one-act plays, many of which were written by famous playwrights of the time.

Perhaps the greatest positive influence on the development of the one-act play in American drama was that of Eugene O'Neill. In 1916 his first play to be produced was presented by the Provincetown Players. Probably no other dramatist in American theater history has written so many excellent one-act plays, many of which are still being acted today. Since 1916 most of America's outstanding playwrights have first succeeded with plays in a one-act form. And today the short play is enjoying great success both on Broadway and in a number of cities outside of New York.

The first short play included in *Highlights* is a radio play by George Bamber, entitled *Return to Dust*. The play was first presented on a popular radio series of the 1950s called *Suspense*, a type of weekly anthology of thrilling and chilling tales of science fiction, fantasy, and horror. *Return to Dust* is an excellent example of the kind of tense and imaginative stories featured weekly on *Suspense*.

The Other Player, a one-act play by Owen G. Arno, is an excellent example of the type of short drama in which the central action concerns a person who is dead, but who, at the same time, provides the nucleus of the dramatic impact of the play. Jeffrey Corlin is central to the action of the play, yet the audience never sees him. At the time the play opens, he is already dead, and the audience sees him through the eyes of different people and in different ways.

CHAPTER XXXVI

RETURN TO DUST

by George Bamber

Bamber's excellent play develops a theme familiar to anyone who has read *Gulliver's Travels:* By changing a man's size, you change his perception of reality, a theme frequently treated by writers of fantasy and science fiction.

In *Return to Dust* a laboratory accident has disastrous results. The "hero" is turned "victim" of his own invention by shrinking him to such small dimensions that ordinary objects take on monstrous proportions that threaten his very life! In this dramatically modified environment, the central character, growing tinier by the minute, desperately struggles to get an antidote before he disappears.

CHARACTERS

James Howard, a research scientist
Miss Pritchart, a secretary
Dr. Bader, Director of Research

ACT ONE

[*Music: Up and out*]

JAMES: [*Gaining presence with the breathy quality of an amateur*] Testing . . . one two three. Testing-testing. Attention, Dr. Warren Bader, Department of Pathology, School of Medicine, State University. Dear Dr. Bader: This is James Howard, Research Fellow in Pathology speaking. Ahhh, I don't know quite how to begin. At the moment I am seated on the tape recorder that is recording this message to you. As a point of fact, by the yard stick on my desk, I stand exactly one foot, one inch tall and I am steadily decreasing in size. Ahhh-hem. I am on top of my desk; I climbed up here before I should shrink to a point where I would be physically unable to get from the floor to the chair and thus to the desk top, and the telephone.

Ahh, it is a very strange experience to find one's desk an insurmountable object, like a mountain, to climb. However, the phone is by my side now and since it is my last contact with the outside world, it is imperative that I do not become separated from it. I have been trying to reach you by phone since eight this morning. As you are not at home, and have not yet arrived at your office, it occurred to me there exists a distinct possibility that I might not be able to contact you before it becomes too late. I calculate that if I continue to shrink at my present rate of speed, it is possible that I will become invisible to the human eye sometime before midnight.

Since you are the only person with an adequate scientific background and technical knowledge to save me, it is imperative that my last whereabouts is known to you in the event that I cannot contact you by phone. [*Quickly*] I'm confident that it will just be a matter of moments before I do; this recording is merely a precaution.

As you will have discovered by now, I have gone against your orders and pursued my theory of cancer cell growth by working at night after my regular duties. This is the same theory I proposed in publication December 1, 1957, and which you publicly ridiculed in the *Scientific American Journal*, September 3, 1958. Unfortunately, you were wrong, Dr. Bader. The biochemical agent not only stops abnormal cell division, but reduces the existing cells in physical size until the neutralizer is induced. [*Groping for proof*] The fact that I have shrunk from five and one half feet to one foot should be proof beyond refutation, though my condition is the result of an accident.

While trying to introduce a more powerful catalyst in the laboratory last night, I inadvertently created an uncontrolled reaction which manifested itself as a white mist which filled the entire lab. The mist lasted no more than a few seconds and as I could observe no effects other than this, I continued working. When I got home, I descended into one of the deepest and blackest sleeps I have ever experienced. I awoke this morning to discover myself literally lost in a sea of blankets.

I had shrunk five feet during the night. Naturally, my first reaction was one of panic, but I soon realized that my only salvation was to remain calm until I contacted you. You'll find a more complete report of my theory, and the experiments which I've conducted to prove it, in the uncompleted thesis here on my desk. [*Trying to conceal his pride*] My thesis, Dr. Bader, will open the door to a cure for man's worst disease: Cancer. Ahhh-hem.

As for myself, you'll find detailed instructions on how to reverse the action which I've accidentally initiated upon myself. You'll find this on pages [*grunting*] 79.

[*Sound: Exaggerated sound, as if the first page of a manuscript were being turned close to a microphone*]

JAMES: . . .through 82, yes, that's right: 79 through 82. No matter how small I may become, even microscopic, you will be able to reverse the process if you follow the instructions on those pages. [*He grunts, as if dropping the leaf of a heavy book*]

[*Sound: The swish and thud of page and book cover closing*]

JAMES: [*Introspectively*] To think that the cover of my thesis, the manuscript I used to carry easily in one hand, has become as difficult for me to move as the cover to my grave. [*Shaking himself out of his reverie*] Here now, no time for morbidity. I had better place another telephone call to your office, Dr. Bader, while I'm still big enough to dial the phone.

[*Sound: Under his speech, James' footsteps across the papers on his desk to the phone*]

JAMES: It is just possible your efficient secretary forgot to tell you that I called. [*Amused*] The phone has grown almost half as tall as I am. [*He lifts the phone*] A strange sensation.

[*Sound: We hear the phone being bumped from its cradle and then clatter as he lets it fall to the desk. The dialing of the phone is exaggerated in amplitude; while the release spin is normal, the wind up is tortured*]

JAMES: [*Dialing, with effort*] Who would think [*Grunt*] the tensor springs on these. . . dials would be so. . . strong. [*He laughs*] And who would think. . . I would have to use both hands. . . to dial a telephone. [*He chuckles mirthlessly*] Steady, James Howard; now is no time to misdial.

[*Sound: The last digit of the number spins into place and we settle down to wait as the phone rings at the other end of the line, once, twice, three times before it is finally picked up*]

MISS PRITCHART: [*She is a woman who has retained her maidenhood for fifty-three years, not only physically, but mentally as well*] [*Filtered*] Pathology, Dr. Bader's office. Miss Pritchart speaking.

JAMES: [*Unable to hide the urgency of his situation from his voice*] Miss Pritchart, has Dr. Bader come in yet?

MISS P: [*Filtered*] Who shall I say is calling?

JAMES: This is James Howard, Miss Pritchart. It's urgent.

MISS P: [*Filtered*] It doesn't sound like you, Mr. Howard.

JAMES: It's me—I—all right.

MISS P: [*Silence as the line goes dead*] I'm sorry, Dr. Bader isn't in. I have your number. . .

JAMES: Are you sure?

MISS P: [*Filtered*] Yes, I am sure. Dr. Bader is not, at this moment, in his office.

JAMES: Now look, Miss Pritchart, don't pull that Dr. Bader-isn't-in stuff to me. You tell Dr. Bader I have to talk to him.

MISS P: [*Filtered*] I'm sorry, Mr. Howard, Dr. Bader is not in.

JAMES: Look, this is a matter of life and death.

MISS P: [*Filtered*] Mr. Howard. . .

JAMES: Tell him to answer his damn telephone.

MISS P: [*Filtered*] Mr. Howard, I assure you Dr. Bader is not in his office. I will have him call you as soon as he comes in. In the meantime, is there anything I can do?

JAMES: There's nothing anyone can do but Dr. Bader. He's the only man in the world that can help me. Do you understand that?

MISS P: [*Filtered*] Well, I'll tell him as soon as he comes in.

JAMES: Yes, you do that, Miss Pritchart.

[*Sound: The filtered click of the receiver being hung up at her end of the line, the thump and clatter of the phone at his end as he replaces it on the cradle*]

JAMES: [*Silence, after a moment*] Why Dr. Bader, why of all days did you have to pick today to change your routine? For the last twenty years you've been in

your office from nine until twelve. Why in hell did you have to pick this morning to change?

[*Music: Up and out—end of Act I*]

ACT TWO

[*Music: Up and out, indicates passage of time*]

JAMES: Yes, self preservation is the most powerful instinct. It is now three-thirty in the afternoon, and I have shrunk to the incredible height of six inches, and I am continuing to shrink, yet I am taking every precaution to guarantee that I stay alive.

But what have I got to live for? What am I? A thirty-two-year old, old man that's losing his hair in front and walks with a stoop from years of hunching over microscopes to watch little cells divide. And what have I got to show for it? A cheap furnished room, a meager position as a research fellow, which doesn't pay enough to live like other people. Not enough to have a wife or children. And no dignity certainly: Yes, Dr. Bader, no, Dr. Bader, most assuredly, Dr. Bader. The old hypocrite!

[*Sound: In the background, we hear the tentative chirp of a parakeet*]

JAMES: All that I can call mine is in this room: one suit, some socks with holes in them, piles of heavy books, the microscope on my desk, and a tape recorder to record my notes on. That's all that will be left of Mr. James Howard, research fellow.

[*Sound: The chattering of the parakeet attracts our attention. He is in a cage overhead*]

JAMES: [*Slightly cheered*] Excuse me, Dr. Pasteur.

[*Sound: Bird again*]

JAMES: And one green and gold parakeet with the name of Pasteur.

[*Sound: Bird*]

JAMES: [*Shouting up to cage*] To pose a hypothetical problem, Dr. Pasteur, who's going to change the water in your cage if I shrink away to infinity? Certainly not Dr. Bader; he might steal what little water you had, but he wouldn't change it.

[*Sound: Bird chattering*]

JAMES: [*To himself*] Who will? If I don't contact the good doctor, it may be a week before the landlady comes up here to clean. He'd starve to death. I've got to open that cage and let him loose. But how? The yard stick.

[*Sound: His walking to the yard stick*]

JAMES: I can push the latch open with that. . . yes. . .

[*Sound: The distant sound of the stick knocking against the metal cage*]

JAMES: Yes. . . I can just reach it. . . [*The effort of swinging the stick*] There. Ah, come on out, the door's open, Dr. Pasteur. You're free. The window is open across the room. There's a whole world ahead of you. Fly away and make a name for yourself. [*To himself*] The whole world. What am I talking about? I've got the whole world at my feet if I live. After I publish my

thesis, I'll be famous. I'll have everything I ever dreamed of. But not unless Dr. Bader has all the instructions. So, we resume taping. But I can't reach the start button on the recorder. These books, like a grand staircase to the top of the recorder.

[*Sound: Clambering footsteps. Feet on metal*]

JAMES: And now to start the machine. [*Effort*] But I can't push it. Kick it—ow, that hurt. I've got it. Jump on it.

[*Sound: Jumps. Big click. Big whirr of machine*]

JAMES: There we go. Dr. Bader? Dr. Bader, this is James Howard recording again. I have still not received your phone call, but I have not given up hope. The call will come. [*The strain is evident in his voice*] I am convinced of that. It is just a matter of time. In the meanwhile, I have made the necessary precautions for isolating myself in the event that you do not call before tomorrow morning. I have taped a ramp, from a ruler, to the stage of the microscope. Glued to the microscope is a transparent glass petri dish. As soon as it becomes apparent that I'm in danger of being lost from view on the desk, I will make my way to the petri dish.

But what if you haven't called by that time? I could be lost in the petri dish. I could prepare a slide for myself. [*Thinking*] If I diminished to the size of a one-celled organism, I would have no difficulty in crawling under the cover glass and taking up a position directly under the lens. Perhaps I should prepare a slide now.

[*Sound: With piercing suddenness the phone begins to ring*]

JAMES: [*With unconcealed joy and relief in his voice*] You've called, Dr. Bader. You've called at last.

[*Sound: The footsteps of a six-inch man running across the desk to the telephone and then the silence that follows as we hear him tugging and grunting. Phone ring. The noise of a phone being pushed this way and that in its cradle*]

JAMES: [*Horrified*] No.

[*Sound: Again the struggle and the phone rings again*]

JAMES: I can't lift it. I'm too small. I can't lift it off the cradle.

[*Sound: Phone ring*]

JAMES: Don't stop ringing, please! I'll lift it. . . but how? A lever! Give me a lever and I can move the world.

[*Sound: Phone ring*]

JAMES: But what? A pencil! I can do it with a pencil. Don't hang up, Dr. Bader. . . I'm looking. . . I'm looking.

[*Sound: His scuffling through the papers on his desk*]

JAMES: A pencil. . . a pencil, a pen. . . Here we are.

[*Sound: Phone ring, and* JAMES *running to the phone*]

JAMES: Please don't hang up, Dr. Bader, I'm coming, I'm coming.

[*Sound: The sound of the pencil being jammed between the receiver and its base and the ensuing struggle to lever it off its base*]

JAMES: Just don't stop ringing. . . please don't stop ringing. . . please. . .

[*Sound: Phone ring*]

JAMES: [*Almost hysterical*] I'm trying. . . I'm trying. . . just don't hang up, Dr. Bader. . . I've almost got it. . . just a little more.

[*Sound: Suddenly the phone receiver clatters against the desk, followed by the running whip of cord against the edge of the desk*]

JAMES: No.

[*Sound: A bump and the crash and ring characteristic of a phone base as it hits the floor after a fall from a table*]

MISS PRITCHART: [*Filtered*] Hello?

JAMES: [*Yelling*] Miss Pritchart?

MISS P.: Mr. Howard?

JAMES: Can you hear me? Get Dr. Bader.

MISS P.: [*Impatient*] Hello?

JAMES: [*Yelling*] Miss Pritchart, I'm on top of the desk. The phone fell on the floor.

MISS P.: Hello?

JAMES: I'm only six inches tall. You've got to get me help.

MISS P.: Hello, are you there, Mr. Howard?

JAMES: Yes, I'm here. I'm here.

[*Sound: The electric buzz of an office intercom filtered over. The phone lying on the floor*]

DR. BADER: [*Filtered—curtly*] Howard!

MISS P.: [*Filtered*] No, this is Miss Pritchart. I called Mr. Howard's room but he doesn't answer or something.

JAMES: [*Yelling*] I'm here, Dr. Bader, I'm here.

DR. BADER: What do you mean he doesn't answer?

MISS P.: Well, I rang and rang and then the phone just went dead. You can hear for yourself.

DR. BADER: Went dead?

JAMES: [*Yelling*] The phone didn't go dead, it fell on the floor.

DR. BADER: [*Filtered*] Well, call him back in about an hour. See if he answers then.

JAMES: Don't hang up, Miss Pritchart. I can't put my phone back on the hook.

MISS P.: What if he doesn't answer then?

JAMES: [*Yelling*] All you'll get is a busy signal.

DR. BADER: What do you mean, what if he doesn't answer? He will.

MISS P.: When he called this morning, he sounded very strange.

JAMES: Don't let him hang up, Miss Pritchart.

DR. BADER: Howard's been very strange since the day he joined the department. If you can't get him today, I'll talk to him when I see him tomorrow.

JAMES: No. . . no. . . no. . .

MISS P.: Yes, Dr. Bader.

JAMES: No-o-o. . . please don't hang up. . .

[*Sound: The click of the receiver being hung up at the far end, followed by the unrelenting dial tone*]

JAMES: I'm still here. . . please don't hang up. . . Dr. Bader, please. . .

[*Sound: In the background, again the dial tone continues. . .*]

[*Music: Up and out. End of Act II*]

ACT THREE

[*Music: Up and out*]

JAMES: I almost gave up when you hung up, Dr. Bader, but then I remembered a simple law of mathematics. No matter how often you divide a thing, there's still something left. So I went ahead with the preparation for my survival. And a good thing too. It's not yet six o'clock, and I am now only an inch and a half tall.

But everything is now arranged. In the exact center of the petri dish on the microscope stage is a prepared slide complete with slip cover and label. The only thing lacking is the specimen, and that is me. If I become so small that I am in danger of being lost in the petri dish, I will make my way to the exact center of the slide and take up a position there. You should be able to see me for some time to come because I focused the microscope. All you have to do, Dr. Bader, is look, just look to see me. My world is such a different place now: books are as huge as buildings and pencils seem like telephone poles. I wonder what my world will look like if no one ever finds me. Oh, yes, Dr. Bader, the slide under the microscope is labeled carefully. Of all the slides I've labeled in my life time, I hardly thought the last one might become my epitaph. Specimen: James Howard; Species: Homo Sapiens; Condition: Excellent.

[*Sound: The flutter of wings passing close by.*]

JAMES: Dr. Pasteur.

[*Sound: Another pass*]

JAMES: Haven't you flown the coop yet?

[*Sound: A flutter and a chirp*]

JAMES: Is your loyalty so great that you refuse to leave so long as the last particle of me remains?

[*Sound: Chirp*]

JAMES: What an ugly monster you are when viewed from this perspective. Your feathers are like scales of armor, infested with lice, I see. . . and that beak. . .

[*Sound: A chirp and a sharp thud on the desk.*]

JAMES: [*Screams*]

[*Sound: The scream frightens the bird, evidently, because we hear the flutter of wings lifting in the air and then settling back down.*]

JAMES: No, Dr. Pasteur, NO. If only I had a weapon. . .

[*Sound: Chirp*]

JAMES: Stay away. [*To himself*] Back up slowly. . . don't run. . . slow. . . back between the books and the microphone. . . slowly: NOW!

[*Sound: Confusion of feet and wings and a screaming chirp followed by heavy*

breathing close to microphone. . . then a chirp, and a tentative peck at the microphone]

JAMES: I'm safe here. . . until he loses interest. I should have let him starve to death in his cage. [*Suddenly afraid*] I wonder if the tape's still recording? I can see the spools still turning, high above me, the clear plastic reflecting the last rays of the sun setting outside my window. . . but I can't see if there's tape. [*Yelling*] Are you still there? Am I recording, Dr. Bader? This is James Howard. As soon as that bird loses interest, I'm going to make a break for it.

I'll make the microscope, Bader, don't you worry. Treat that slide marked "James Howard" just like it was me. You understand? Even if you don't think I'm in it. If you can't bring me back, publish my thesis for me. [*Yelling*] You hear me, Dr. Bader? Publish my thesis. I can't die smaller than dust unknown. Publish. . . I have nothing left, Dr. Bader, not even my body. Give me my thesis. [*A new idea*] You wouldn't dare publish it in your name, Dr. Bader, would you? All you'll have to do is change the name on the title page. You wouldn't stoop that low, would you? [*Screaming*] No, no! Give me my thesis, Dr. Bader, give me that much. Do you hear me? Am I recording? Give me immortality, Dr. Bader. I want the world to know I lived. Publish the thesis in my name. Do you hear me, Dr. Bader? Give me immort—

[*Sound: Under the approaching flutter of the bird—then a huge chirp—and the thud of the bird's. . . mandibles closing on mike. . . fade. . . fluttering wings and chirp of bird to normal level. . .*]

[*Music: Up and out*]

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What has caused James Howard's problem? How does he prepare to solve it?

2. How does Howard show that he is scientific in his approach to a solution to his predicament? Cite examples.

3. Does Howard have confidence in Dr. Bader? How do you know?

4. What is Howard's fear regarding his thesis?

5. What finally happens to Howard? Has the author prepared the reader (or listener) for the ending? Explain your answer.

6. Is the ending of the play in keeping with the title? Can you think of other possible titles?

7. How does Howard's kindness ironically contribute to his own fate?

8. Make a list of the different problems that Howard encountered because of his shrinking size and the ways he overcame them.

9. If you were directing this play, how would you indicate Howard's shrinking size through his voice? How would you handle the sound effects?

10. Do you think this play could be produced on the stage, for television, or as a movie? Why or why not?

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE OTHER PLAYER

by Owen G. Arno

The setting of this play, a boy's dormitory room in an American preparatory school, tells the reader something about the kind of people he will meet and what their backgrounds will be. A prep school is a private high school where boys live away from home and prepare for college. Many of these boys are wealthy, their fathers donating generously to the school. But no gifts can exempt the boys from the keen competition and academic pressure of a private school. There are traditions to uphold, especially for the boy whose father attended the school before him.

CHARACTERS

Dr. Becker, *headmaster; in his late forties* Corlin, *father of a student; in his late forties* Peter Cross, *a student at the Grey-Matthews School*

SETTING

A room in a dormitory of the Grey-Matthews School for Boys in New England. It is a morning in late June.

The curtain rises on one of the larger rooms in the dormitory of a New England preparatory school known as the Grey-Matthews School for Boys. Though in more active periods the room has an air of cheerfulness about it, at the present time there is something disconcertingly quiet about the place, and the utter tidiness gives the room an atmosphere lacking warmth. At Stage Left is a large oak door which leads out to a hallway that we cannot see. At the Back Left corner of the room is an enormous chest of drawers, and near the bureau is a small bed. To the Right of this bed is a chair, and directly behind both the chair and the bed is a large window which exudes a flood of sunlight. At the back, too (Stage Right), is a bookcase, on top of which rests an assortment of gold and silver trophy cups, together with sheets of wood which lean against the back wall. Tacked onto the sheets of wood are a number of medals. Near the bookcase, against the Right wall, are a desk and chair. There are two additional beds in the room, of the same size as the first: one of them is Down Right, the other is near the back, between the bookcase and the window. At the present moment, between the chest of drawers and the first bed, are two suitcases resting on the floor.

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At curtain, there is no one on stage. Presently, however, the door to the room opens, and two men enter. Dr. Becker, followed by Corlin. The latter is a man in his late forties. His clothes are expensive but drab. One has the feeling immediately that this is a man who has never really had a fair share of pleasure in life. He appears, at this moment particularly, wan and tired. Dr. Becker is about the same age as Corlin and dressed in the traditional garb of a prep school headmaster, from the grey suit and vest to the pipe precariously balanced in his mouth. Dr. Becker appears articulate and self-assured, both traits having been carefully developed through the years.

DR. BECKER. *(Smiling gently).* This is his room. I suppose you've seen it before, Mr. Corlin. *(Corlin stares about the room, attempting to take it all in. As he does this, his anguish is noticeable, but he tries to keep it under control).*

CORLIN. Yes, of course. I was here only last spring. *(Corlin moves over to the bed nearest the window. Absentmindedly, he smooths down the cover with the palm of his hand.)*

DR. BECKER. We tried to leave his things—as he had left them. But I must say we took the liberty of tidying up the drawers a bit. Not that they were messy, you understand.

CORLIN. *(Vaguely).* . . .Of course.

DR. BECKER. . . .On the contrary, Jeffrey was a very tidy young man.

CORLIN. Yes, he was, wasn't he?

DR. BECKER. *(Indicating the medals and trophies on the bookcase).* These, of course, are all of his medals and trophies—those that he won this past year, at the tennis matches and at the track. I suppose you've seen them, also.

CORLIN. *(Crossing to the bookcase).* I believe I've seen some of them. *(Noticing one of the cups.)* But this is new, isn't it? I see it was another award he received for his tennis playing.

DR. BECKER. That's right. *(In a low voice).* He was quite an athlete, your young man.

CORLIN. I know. *(He picks up the cup to read the inscription.)*

DR. BECKER. The staff had that one especially engraved for Jeffrey. We asked him what he wanted to have inscribed on it—*(Chuckling,)* which was, I suppose, a little irregular. But we wanted to make sure it would please him.

CORLIN. That was very thoughtful of you.

DR. BECKER. *(Still smiling gently).* I'm afraid he may have been a little embarrassed by our gesture. He was always such a modest boy. In fact, he told us, at first, that he didn't even want us to put his name on the cup.

CORLIN. I notice you did, anyway.

DR. BECKER. We certainly did. It was our way of letting him know how all of us felt about him—and what a delight it was having him as a student here. Also, I must admit, a top athlete makes a school an especially exciting place. And it isn't often we come across one like Jeffrey at Grey-Matthews.

CORLIN. *(Smiling weakly).* I've seen some of your other students play, and they're all really quite superior, too.

DR. BECKER. Perhaps. But none of them was as outstanding as your son, Mr. Corlin. I want you to believe that, and I hope you don't think I'm merely

saying it because—of what happened. We may not have too frequent a chance to chat in the future, you and I—at least not like this. *(With a smile).* I hope this isn't impertinence masking as a school principal's *prérogative*, Mr. Corlin.

CORLIN. *(Confused, not really understanding what he means).* What I value most is your wanting to speak to me about Jeffrey at all. As a matter of fact, I welcome anything you might have to tell me—no matter how insignificant it may seem. In a sense, that's one of the reasons why I felt I had to come back here—to see his room—to speak to his instructors—to touch the very things he himself touched. My family tried to discourage me from coming here. They told me it would be turning his death into a kind of obsession. But I'm glad I didn't listen to them. I believe that once this sojourn—is over, I'll have brought a certain end to everything. Am I making myself clear, Dr. Becker?

DR. BECKER. Of course. And that was why I had to tell you how admired Jeffrey was.

CORLIN. . . . You must feel free to tell me other things about him—the things he did, the things he thought—because this is perhaps the last glimpse I'm being permitted to see of them.

DR. BECKER. He was an intelligent young man. . .

CORLIN. Yes, that I know.

DR. BECKER. He created the appearance of a fine boy from a good background.

CORLIN. But what about his interests? Or was being a star athlete the only thing that mattered to him?

DR. BECKER. I thought perhaps Jeffrey may have—written to you—about his interests, I mean.

CORLIN. Oh, of course there were letters. And I read them—though I'm sorry to admit I never really paid enough attention to what they had to tell me. I suppose it was because they'd always reach me at some crucial point in my travels. I remember one particular letter that arrived when I was finishing up a little management consultant assignment in London. I never had a chance to read that one until nearly a month later, when I was in Tyrol—on still another job. Traveling about like that can make you forget—personal contact. And that, I suppose, is a dreadful thing.

DR. BECKER. I'm sure Jeffrey never felt a lack of personal contact with you, Mr. Corlin. I don't suppose I'm stepping out of bounds in saying that.

CORLIN. Had he ever spoken to you about me?

DR. BECKER. Often. But then he confided in me quite a bit. We got along rather well, your son and I.

CORLIN. And he never mentioned that I may have been a little negligent about him—that he felt, perhaps, I was possibly rejecting him?

DR. BECKER. Not once did he ever mention anything like that. The fact that you appreciated his having won so many awards thrilled him beyond belief. He may have gone out of his way to compete in all the games and tournaments because he knew that made you happy.

CORLIN. *(Numbly).* Was that why he entered the swimming tournament?

DR. BECKER. *(Forgetting himself).* Why, it may have been. He knew you'd always been a champion swimmer yourself, and his swimming was the one sport that was just a little—weak. So he tried and tried, and—*(Realizing what he is saying, he stops in horror).*

CORLIN. . . .He tried and tried until he drowned himself.

DR. BECKER. *(After a moment, quietly, regaining his composure).* Now I didn't mean that, Mr. Corlin. I'm sorry—I didn't mean that at all.

CORLIN. *(His voice breaking).* Were you—there—when it happened?

DR. BECKER. I was in my office. But I heard about it only a few minutes afterward. My office, you see, is right next to the Gym Building.

CORLIN. They told me it happened very quickly.

DR. BECKER. *(Quietly, somewhat unnerved by the track the conversation has taken).* Yes, I believe that's true.

CORLIN. They said there were no other swimmers near him. He was just out there—in the center of the pool—all alone. It was just a cramp, a tightening of the stomach muscles. And he went under.

DR. BECKER. As soon as the guard saw what was happening, he dived into the pool—but—Jeffrey was already—gone. I swear to you, we did everything we could to revive him.

CORLIN. I know, Dr. Becker. The others gave me a complete report. I don't want you to think I'm blaming this school. An accident like that could never have occurred out of neglect. It was just one of those strange, freak occurrences one reads about in books, but which one always doubts could possibly occur in real life.

DR. BECKER. I should never have said what I did about *why* he insisted on entering the swimming tournament. It was stupid and callous of me. I didn't mean that he swam merely to impress you. Grey-Matthews isn't to blame for what happened to your son, but you're not to blame either.

CORLIN. *(Managing a smile).* When he won that tennis cup last spring, I wrote him a long letter, telling him how pleased he had made me. Perhaps I seemed too pleased, and he wanted to please me even further. . . Well, perhaps we shouldn't dwell on that. *(Pause).* This may sound like a silly question—did Jeffrey have many girl friends?

DR. BECKER. *(Laughing lightly).* No more nor less than the average fifteen-year-old, I suppose. Most of our boys are friendly with girls from the Reardon School, which is only about a mile and a half away. We have dances with Reardon at least once a month.

CORLIN. I suppose he would have enjoyed knowing more girls. He had never been around too many women. What about friends? Did he have many close buddies?

DR. BECKER. It's a pity you haven't had a chance to meet some of them today. But most of the students, including Jeffrey's roommates, have left for the summer. Otherwise, you might have talked at great length with them.

There's merely a handful left—a few whose families are more lenient or away on vacation.

CORLIN. I probably would have allowed Jeffrey to stay on, too—at least until the beginning of August. When he was here last summer, he wrote me about what a marvelous time he had with all the facilities almost entirely to himself.

DR. BECKER. In a sense, they were his. Or, should I say, a generous gift from his father?

CORLIN. I was very happy about giving whatever I could to this school. Remember, Dr. Becker, that this was not only one of the most cherished places in Jeffrey's world, but at one time—quite a number of years ago—it was one of the most cherished places in mine. *(Corlin slumps down on the edge of the bed nearest the window, and he puts his hand to his forehead. He seems to be struggling to keep from weeping.)*

DR. BECKER. I have a feeling this talk may be making things worse for you.

CORLIN. No—no, of course not. *(There is a pause, as Dr. Becker watches Corlin closely. Then, suddenly, Corlin turns his head away and lets out a sob.)* Oh, maybe it was wrong of me to have come back here after all. I was so confident I was going to be strong about this. On the train coming up here, I kept saying to myself that in one sense I'd been lucky. Having Jeffrey was the only solid and fine thing in my life. If nothing else, I could cling to what I'd had. But now—seeing his room again—talking with you—. *(Suddenly, he takes hold of himself again. He turns to face Dr. Becker and rises.)* Forgive me. I realize this meeting must be painful for you, too.

DR. BECKER. *(Pause).* Would you like me to help you pack his belongings?

CORLIN. Thank you, no. That was something I had looked forward to doing myself. I want to make absolutely certain all of his things are intact. I'm putting them all back into his old room at home. What time is it now?

DR. BECKER. *(Glancing at his watch).* It's nearly eleven-thirty. You'll be having lunch with us, won't you?

CORLIN. No. I won't stay very much longer. I just want to pack his things and bring them home. I want to be back in Boston by two-thirty.

DR. BECKER. You'd like to be left alone then.

CORLIN. If you don't mind. That isn't against the rules, is it?

DR. BECKER. Of course it isn't. Please stop by before you leave. The others will want to say good-bye.

CORLIN. Thank you for everything, Dr. Becker.

DR. BECKER. If you need me, I'll be in my office.

CORLIN. Thank you, but I don't think I shall. *(Dr. Becker smiles and nods his head. Then, he turns and exits quickly. Corlin turns slowly, taking the room in once again. He crosses to the bookcase and begins examining the medals and cups once more. Then, he crosses to the bureau and opens the top drawer. He stares at the contents of the drawer for several moments before he begins removing some of the clothing and the other belongings from it, placing them on the nearest bed. A moment later, he lifts up one of the suitcases, placing that, too, on the bed. He flips the switches open*

on each side of the suitcase and begins putting the belongings into the case when suddenly his hands fall to his side, helplessly, and he sits down at the edge of the bed, staring out of the window aimlessly. There is a moment's pause. Then there is a gentle knock on the door.) Come in. *(The door opens slowly, and Peter Cross enters the room. He is a slender, somewhat nervous boy of fifteen. At the moment, he is noticeably quite shy. Corlin looks up at him and doesn't react to his presence one way or the other. Corlin and Peter stare at each other a moment rather uncomfortably, until finally Corlin manages a smile).* Hello.

PETER. How do you do, sir. Ex—excuse me. I hope I'm not disturbing you. I can come back in a little while.

CORLIN. That's all right. You're not disturbing me.

PETER. I—I'm Peter Cross. You're Mr. Corlin, aren't you?

CORLIN. That's right. How do you know me?

PETER. I've seen you at Grey-Matthews before, sir. I didn't know you were here until a little while ago. I overheard Dr. Edwards and Dr. Becker talking about it.

CORLIN. *(He has grown a trifle uneasy at the boy's obvious tension).* Why don't you sit down, Peter?

PETER. No—no thanks, sir. I can't be staying too long. I'm going home today. My aunt's coming up for me in a little while.

CORLIN. *(Absently).* I see.

PETER. And I still haven't packed. My aunt hates being kept waiting. Last year this time I kept her waiting a whole hour, but she was wandering through the offices, making friends with everyone on the staff. She's very outgoing—my aunt.

CORLIN. Well, perhaps I'll have a chance to meet her.

PETER. When will you be leaving, sir?

CORLIN. Fairly soon, I suppose—as soon as I finish packing these things.

PETER. Are—are you packing all of them, sir?

CORLIN. *(Puzzled).* Why, yes, of course.

PETER. All—*right now,* sir?

CORLIN. *(Slightly annoyed).* Of course right now. I'm bringing them back to Boston with me this afternoon.

PETER. *(A pause. He stares at Corlin).* Sir—I—I don't know how to say it, sir?

CORLIN. What's that?

PETER. —That I'm sorry, sir. I mean—about Jeffrey. I guess I don't know how to put these things. I feel so stupid right now. But please accept my sympathies. *(Corlin looks at him, first puzzled and then, after a moment, understanding the boy's awkwardness.)*

CORLIN. *(Smiling).* You don't sound stupid at all, Peter. Naturally, I accept your sympathies.

PETER. It must be very hard on you, sir. On you *and* Mrs. Corlin.

CORLIN. *(Without emotion).* There is no Mrs. Corlin, Peter.

PETER. *(Growing embarrassed again).* Oh. You see how stupid I get, sir. People are always telling me I say and do the wrong things all the time.

CORLIN. There's nothing wrong in what you just said, Peter. It's a natural assumption that there's a *Mrs.* Corlin.

PETER. It's always a little tough talking about people who aren't living. I guess I should know that more than anything else, considering my parents aren't living either.

CORLIN. Oh, I'm terribly sorry.

PETER. When did Mrs. Corlin pass away?

CORLIN. *(Wryly).* Mrs. Corlin is very much alive, I believe. She and I are just not—*living together,* you might say. And she has a different last name these days.

PETER. Oh, I understand.

CORLIN. And you? You live with your aunt?

PETER. For as long as I can remember. I guess it doesn't hurt too much when you can't recall the ones in your family who die.

CORLIN. No, it doesn't hurt too much then.

PETER. And Aunt Helena has been better than a mother and father to me, sending me to this school and all.

CORLIN. Yes, that is a good thing, isn't it?

PETER. . . . I don't suppose there's any reason why I should take up your time, sir—since you say you're going away soon. Is it all right if I just take one of my things and leave, too?

CORLIN. Yes? What is that, Peter?

PETER. *(There is a long pause as he stares at Corlin uncertainly).* I mean my racket, sir. My tennis racket.

CORLIN. Your tennis racket, eh? Did you leave it in this room?

PETER. *(Suddenly frightened).* Yes sir, I left it in this room. Now if I may have it and go, I promise I won't bother you any more.

CORLIN. *(Very puzzled).* Of course. *(Peter crosses quickly to the very drawer which Corlin has opened and, at first, pokes about in it gently. Still somewhat confused, Corlin watches the boy almost hypnotically. Then, quite suddenly—and with determination—Peter throws open the second drawer from the top and rummages furiously among its contents. The realization that these are Jeffrey's things strikes Corlin with a brutal impact, and as Peter begins upsetting the clothes in the drawer even further, Corlin advances on the boy. Almost against his will, Corlin finds himself seizing Peter's arm brusquely.)* Here now, what's that you're doing?

PETER. *(Pulling away).* Oh, I'm sorry. I guess I've upset his things, haven't I?

CORLIN. *(Regaining his composure).* That's all right. I'm packing them anyway. But I'd like to know why you were looking through these particular drawers.

PETER. Because my racket must be in one of them.

CORLIN. I don't understand.

PETER. Jeffrey borrowed my racket—just this past spring. *(With a nervous chuckle).* I guess he must have forgotten to give it back. And since I'm going home today, I thought I might as well take it.

CORLIN. *(Disturbed).* Jeffrey borrowed your tennis racket? You must be mistaken.

PETER. No, I'm not, sir. He borrowed it last spring—right before the tournament.

CORLIN. That can't be true. I sent Jeffrey a lot of money last spring. Part of that money was to be used to buy all the tennis equipment he needed. I told him to buy the best racket he could find—to spare no expense. What in the world could he have possibly wanted with your racket? *(Peter stares up at Corlin a moment, then quickly looks down at the third drawer from the top and flings it open. At the top of the drawer lies a tennis racket.)*

PETER. Oh, here it is, sir. Right here. *(He reaches for the racket, but Corlin pushes him gently away from the bureau).*

CORLIN. *(Pulling the racket out of the drawer).* Is this the racket you claim is yours, Peter?

PETER. *(Excitedly).* Yes, yes, it is. Now let me have it, sir. I tell you—I have to finish packing. My aunt will be here soon.

CORLIN. I can't just let you have this without some proof that it's yours. You see, it's so important to me that I bring back all of Jeffrey's belongings intact. That was the main reason I made this trip myself and prevented anyone else from making it.

PETER. You'll find all his other things in—intact. But this racket is mine!

CORLIN. I can't see why a young man who had everything he could want would insist on borrowing somebody else's athletic equipment.

PETER. *(After a moment, quietly).* It was the only thing he ever borrowed, sir—from anyone.

CORLIN. *(Springing the racket against his fingers).* What, may I ask, is so extraordinary about this racket that he had to use it in the tournament?

PETER. *(After a long pause, staring straight into Corlin's eyes. Very quietly).* But that's just it. He didn't use it in the tournament.

CORLIN. *(With an uncomfortable laugh).* When did he use it, then?

PETER. He never used it, sir.

CORLIN. *(His voice rising almost uncontrollably).* Then why did he borrow it from you?

PETER. *(Suddenly no longer able to restrain himself either).* He didn't borrow it, sir. He took it.

CORLIN. *Took?* Isn't that the same thing as *borrowed?*

PETER. If I may have it and go.

CORLIN. *(Angrily).* What do you mean he *took* your racket?

PETER. He—he stole it, sir. *(Corlin's eyes open wide in disbelief. He remains utterly motionless, and so does the boy. There is a long pause.)* I'm sorry, sir. Please forgive me. I forgot for the moment he was your son.

CORLIN. *(His voice wavering on the verge of hysteria).* Get out of this room! I want you out of his room, do you hear me?

PETER. *(About to weep).* Yes, sir. Yes, sir. I promise I'll leave. But I have to take my tennis racket with me. I have to have it, sir. You don't understand. Oh, you don't understand.

CORLIN. I understand that you came in here and deliberately flaunted about the name of a deceased boy in front of his own father. How dare you make that sort of accusation!

PETER. I didn't mean to say it, sir. But it came out. I just couldn't help it. You wouldn't believe it when I told you he had *borrowed* it, so I had to tell you the truth.

CORLIN. Then you insist my son was a thief.

PETER. I didn't say that. I just said he stole this racket, sir.

CORLIN. Damn it, stop calling me "sir."

PETER. I'm sorry.

CORLIN. The only thing you need be sorry about is what you said about my son. *Steal?* I couldn't conceive of Jeffrey doing anything like that—even if he had been a poor boy.

PETER. It had nothing to do with what the racket cost. He just had to have *my* racket.

CORLIN. Why *your* racket?

PETER. Because I was his opponent in one of the games, sir. He felt he'd have a better chance of winning if he knew I didn't have this particular racket to help me.

CORLIN. Oh, I find this even more impossible to believe than that other terrible accusation.

PETER. It's true, sir. You see, everyone was talking about me being his only real competition—in the tournament, I mean—and Jeffrey knew how much I relied on this particular racket for my game. You see, it belonged to my father, and it's always been sort of a good-luck trophy to me. I can't really play without it—and whenever I played, I won, sir. But Jeffrey took it, so I would have to go out and buy another one. And as it turned out, I lost the very first game.

CORLIN. Of course you lost. Because you lacked Jeffrey's skill. Why, Dr. Becker was in here only a moment ago, telling me what a wonderful athlete he was!

PETER. He sure was, sir. The best in the school, in fact.

CORLIN. Well?

PETER. But I still think I had a chance to beat him in the tennis tournament. And a few of the other kids felt the same way—that is, until he took my racket. *(Corlin stares at Peter a moment, then takes him by the arm gently, attempting to lead him out of the room.)*

CORLIN. *(Quietly, trying to maintain his self-control).* All right, no more of this. You and I are going to have a chat with Dr. Becker and a few of the instructors. I want to find out right now if what you say is true.

PETER. *(Pulling away. Almost hysterically).* Oh, no. Please, sir, no. You can't tell them what I told you. They'll never forgive me. They'll never let me go another year to this school. And that would break Aunt Helena's heart. It would, I swear it. Besides, they'll only say I'm lying. They'll have to protect Jeffrey now.

CORLIN. Don't try to back out of it, Peter. I'm sure if we sat down with Dr. Becker, discussing the entire story rationally, we'd find out if what you just told me is true.

PETER. *(Beginning to weep).* You've just got to let me have my racket and go. It's all that means anything to me—the only thing in this whole world.

CORLIN. Don't the instructors know about—this incident? I'm certain you must have discussed it with them if this racket means so much to you.

PETER. I couldn't do that.

CORLIN. And why not?

PETER. It's too involved a story.

CORLIN. You'd better tell me, Peter, or else I warn you, I *shall* take you to Dr. Becker and the others.

PETER. *(Continuing to weep).* Please don't make me tell you.

CORLIN. I'm listening, Peter.

PETER. *(Blurting it out).* But he was your *son!*

CORLIN. I'm listening.

PETER. *(As he speaks his voice grows more and more uncontrolled).* I did threaten to tell a couple of the instructors about it, but Jeffrey said if I did, he'd get me for it.

CORLIN. *Get you?*

PETER. The way he got some of the others. With me, he was the worst I'd ever seen him. He threatened to get me expelled. He said he'd go to you, and you'd take care of all the necessary arrangements by talking to Dr. Becker. He said you'd given a lot of money to the school and that everyone listened to you. And so I got scared, sir. I got scared that they would throw me out, and I knew how that would hurt Aunt Helena. She's a funny old lady. She's always trying to make people like her, but she's really always by herself. And she thinks a lot of me because I'm the only person who really pays attention to her.

CORLIN. I don't give a damn about your Aunt Helena. I want to hear about Jeffrey.

PETER. . . .He scared the instructors, too, Mr. Corlin. One of them—Mr. Holloway—he quit his job over Jeffrey—because Jeffrey was doing all sorts of awful things to him, getting the other kids to hate him, and making fun of him right to his face just because he happened to be a little strange sometimes and wore the same suit to class every day with cigarette ashes all over it. But I liked Mr. Holloway, and he was a good teacher. We were friends.

CORLIN. What happened to him?

PETER. Well, when Mr. Holloway went to Dr. Becker and told him about how Jeffrey was tormenting him and everything, Dr. Becker didn't do anything about it. I happen to know that because Mr. Holloway told me before he left. He said that one day the whole school was going to fall apart because of that—because of what Jeffrey was doing.

CORLIN. It's inconceivable that an entire school would listen to a fifteen-year-old boy because his father happened to have donated some money. I can't believe you were all afraid of me. *(Corlin sits down at the edge of the bed nearest the window, his head lowered.)*

PETER. It wasn't *you* so much, sir. We had seen you, and you didn't look like the

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sort of fellow people should be scared of. It was Jeffrey who had us all scared. It was the way he looked at you, sometimes—very stern-like, and with his face up close against yours. It *was* pretty scary, believe me.

CORLIN. *(His head still lowered. In a daze, the tension in him rising).* . . . You're lying, son. . .

PETER. He had people on his side of course, but that was because he gave them money sometimes—so that they'd back him up. Anyway, if he gave you money or not—and he wanted you on his side—you couldn't very well say "no."

CORLIN. *(His voice rising).* . . . You're lying. . .

PETER. *(He is completely lost now in what he is saying).* And sometimes he would say terrible things about us—right to our faces, like he did with Mr. Holloway. He was physically stronger than most of us, too, and that made us even more afraid. One day, one of his roommates called Jeffrey a—dirty name—and Jeffrey beat him up so bad he ended up in the hospital—I swear it.

CORLIN. *(Completely losing his control now, he rises suddenly and in a fury, he slaps the boy several times across the face).* . . . You're lying, you're lying, you're lying . . . *(Then, overcome, Corlin falls down on the edge of the bed, burying his face in his hands. Peter stands near him, completely motionless. Suddenly, Peter reaches out as if to comfort Corlin but pulls back instead, afraid. After a moment, Corlin looks up at him and holds out the tennis racket to the boy, his voice choked with sobs.)* Here—take it—take the God-awful thing. I couldn't keep it now, anyway. *(Peter hesitates a moment, and then he reaches out for the racket but withdraws his hands from it suddenly as if it were a burning piece of coal.)* Didn't you hear what I said? I don't want it near me. It's yours. *(Peter takes the racket with one swift gesture and leaves the room very quickly. Corlin sits, motionless, struggling desperately to calm himself. Then, he brushes away his tears with the palm of his hand. In a daze, he rises and returns to the bureau, looking at Jeffrey's belongings a moment, then falls against the cabinet, clinging to it for support. After a very long pause, the door opens again. It is Peter. The boy's eyes are fixed and expressionless. Corlin whirls about suddenly. Peter holds the racket out to Corlin at arm's length.)*

PETER. *(His voice cold and completely devoid of emotion).* I'm sorry. I made it all up, sir. I just wanted Jeffrey's tennis racket. *(Corlin continues to stare at the boy, his eyes filled with bewilderment, as Peter continues holding the racket out to him, deathly still, and the curtain slowly falls.)*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Corlin comes to the Grey-Matthews School with a specific purpose in mind. What does he plan to do?
2. In what way does the conversation between Dr. Becker and Corlin reveal Becker's attitude toward Corlin? What does the conversation reveal about the relationship between Jeffrey Corlin and his father?
3. Do you think Corlin was a good father? Explain your answer.
4. Why is the truth about the tennis racket so important? What does the racket represent to Peter? to Corlin?
5. In your opinion, why does Corlin have a difficult time accepting the truth about his son from Peter?
6. How does Peter's rough treatment of Jeffrey's drawers reflect Peter's basic attitude toward Jeffrey? Do you think this same attitude extends to the father? Why or why not?
7. Does Dr. Becker's conversation with Corlin reveal much about Jeffrey's character? Explain your answer.
8. In your opinion, what influences Peter to give up the tennis racket?
9. What does Peter's subsequent denial of the truth about Jeffrey lead you to conclude about Jeffrey? about Peter?
10. Describe your feelings about Peter.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

The conclusion to "The Other Player" is left to the imagination of the reader. The author has succeeded in revealing the character of the dead boy. However, in this type of play, more than one solution or ending is possible.
Write your version of a five or ten minute scene of what you think would happen if the conversation between Corlin and Peter were to continue. You might like to re-introduce Dr. Becker or even add another character. Be prepared to present your scene to the class and defend your version of another ending.

SUGGESTIONS TO THE TEACHER

Highlights of American Literature contains selections from the wide range of American literature, from its beginnings to the modern period. No attempt has been made to simplify the literary selections, since the reading material is intended for high-intermediate/advanced level students of English as a foreign language. Students at this level should be able to spend less class time on actual development of reading skills and instead devote more time to the content of the readings themselves, thus moving in the direction of appreciation and enjoyment of American literature. And, of course, lively and stimulating discussion of the material provides meaningful practice in speaking and the organization of ideas.

Should *Highlights* be used with students who have just finished a basic course in English, the teacher will need to realize that a modification of teaching approach will be needed.

Students who have just finished a basic course in English will encounter this material at that point in their language learning process where the relative emphasis on the spoken and written language is undergoing the most rapid change. In the early stage of modern language learning, the principal emphasis is on the spoken language, with the written language used only as a necessary tool. Then, as facility with the spoken language develops, students are gradually taught to write the forms they have learned orally. In the process they also learn to read these forms. But throughout the basic course, even though the student learns to read short narratives and dialogues, the emphasis remains on the spoken language. After the basic course, however, the student should be ready to concentrate on learning to read, using his command of the spoken language as a tool to that end.

The transition which the student will be asked to make from the rather effortless reading of material based on oral drills may not be an easy one. You will want to analyze carefully your students' reading ability so that your presentation of this more difficult material will be as painless as possible and at the same time will bear fruit.

You will probably discover that your students have had little or no systematic training in reading literature. Your task in this case then becomes one of training your students in the basic study-reading skills: (1) how to notice details, (2) how to get the main idea, (3) how to skim to locate pertinent passages, and (4) how to read orally when the occasion demands it. Essentially, you are training your students to adapt their reading skills to different types of material and thus to achieve in the best way possible their purposes in reading.

In his book, *Linguistics And Reading*, Dr. Charles C. Fries states that the teaching of reading is a developmental and continuous process to bring about a progressive refinement of skills. He divides the learning of reading into three stages: (1) the *transfer stage* which is the association of auditory signals with visual representations, (2) the *productive stage* in which the reader's responses to graphic representations become automatic to the extent that comprehension of meaning enables him to supply signals not included in the visual signs; and (3) the *vivid-imaginative stage* in which the reading ability becomes automatic to the extent that reading is widely used in acquiring and developing experience.

The basic organization of *Highlights Of American Literature* is as follows: general introduction to the literary period, chapter essays about individual authors, selections from the author's writings (usually divided into two parts if it is a prose selection), discussion questions at the end of each prose selection or group of poems, and discussion questions at the end of each chapter.

By limiting the length of most of the literary selections, an attempt has been made to furnish material adequate to meet the curriculum needs of an average class meeting three hours a week for one semester (45-48 hours). Study of some of the shorter chapters may require only two hours of classwork, while

that of the longer selections may extend to as many as four class periods.

General Guidelines

The objective of *Highlights* is to teach reading in a cultural context. As you teach the various units, you should keep in mind that the students' often imperfect knowledge of and experience with American culture will tend to interfere with their understanding. You will want to aid their comprehension by building on knowledge acquired from previous reading and to help them manipulate or recall concepts already established through the association of the author's ideas and their own.

As you use this material, you should strive to teach the whole of a reading selection before you teach its parts. One of the best ways to do this is by going over the material with the students in class. In so doing you will help the students surmount the major obstacles that the foreign student encounters when learning English grammatical structure, vocabulary, and content.

You should also keep in mind that in many cases the problems which students will have in learning to read silently will be similar to those they have while listening, and that the problems which they will have in reading aloud will be similar to those they have in speaking.

The teaching techniques that you decide to employ will depend largely upon the ability of your students. In some cases, your classes may be so advanced that you will be able to move through the study unit very quickly, almost as though you were teaching students whose native language was English. If this is true, you will want to concentrate on increasing reading speed, improving the students' ability to read critically and independently, and suggesting collateral reading to meet the students' expanding interest. In other cases, however, you may find that your students are less advanced and that you will have to emphasize a more developmental approach by guiding them to use English as a learning tool.

Creative teaching is predicated upon the ability of the teacher to motivate students by arousing their interest in the material to be studied. However, this is not always an easy task. Such teaching demands a lively imagination, ability to analyze and anticipate student needs, and a willingness to experiment. Some possible ways to motivate your students are (1) to show relevance of ideas found in their reading to their own lives; (2) to create in them a desire to extract greater meaning from what they read; and (3) to guide them to discover major points by which they can judge the relative importance of the ideas they encounter.

General Methodology

A basic approach to teaching *Highlights* should incorporate some or all of the following methods:

(1) Make constant use of examples in explaining complex sentence structures.
(2) Explain the nuances, range of meaning, and special references of a new word rather than a single lexical meaning.
(3) Draw parallels in the students' own culture to clarify the meaning of idiomatic expressions.
(4) Give ample background explanation of new facts not within the students' experience.
(5) Encourage the students to deduce the meaning of new words from their relationship to familiar words in the sentence or paragraph.
(6) Make frequent use of paraphrases to help the students organize their ideas and relate them to those of the author. The paraphrase is useful both for oral and writing practice.

Presentation Techniques

The basic techniques for teaching reading should include the following:

(1) *In-class reading of the text, either orally or silently, by the class as a whole, by the individual student, or by the teacher.* To avoid tedium, it is better to use a combination of these techniques. (Above all, the class period should not be reduced to a series of paragraphs read aloud by individual students followed by corrections by the teacher.) One good technique is for the teacher to read a

selection aloud while the students listen with books closed. This can be followed by a re-reading of the selection with the students following silently with their books open. This type of reading provides opportunity for you to answer questions about new words used in context and strange or difficult grammatical structures. Silent reading by the class, paragraph by paragraph, followed by discussion of lexical and grammatical problems is also a good technique.

(2) *Correction and drill on pronunciation problems after a student has read aloud.* Again, to avoid boredom, it is better to limit oral reading by individual students to two or three sentences or one paragraph at the most. (Keep in mind that at this advanced stage in the student's language development, oral reading serves more to measure the student's comprehension than to test his ability to read orally. Oral reading in itself is a special skill, even for native speakers of English!) Generally, the fluency with which a student reads aloud will give some indication of his language level and his comprehension of the subject matter. Oral reading gives the student a chance to read connected discourse without interruption. Corrected pronunciation and intonation errors committed by one student should be drilled orally by the whole class.

(3) *Explanation of new grammatical structures.* You should not attempt to explain every structure. Be selective and concentrate on those structures which illustrate characteristics of the author's style, which will have greater practical use for later written exercises, or which pose obstacles to the students' understanding of the material.

(4) *Comprehension check* through constant use of questions requiring short factual answers or by means of true-false statements. Comprehension questions attempt to discover how well the student has understood what he has read and constrast with discussion-type questions which seek to elicit answers based on interpretation or opinions.

Composition Techniques

Writing practice can be accomplished in a variety of ways.

(1) *Paraphrase.* Students can be asked to re-write selected paragraphs in their own words. You may assign such an exercise as homework or put key words on the blackboard and have students write the paraphrases in class.

(2) *Topic sentence.* You can provide one or more topic sentences for the students to develop into a paragraph or a longer composition. Topic sentences should be related to the reading material. For example: You may give topic sentences which can be developed into paragraphs describing persons, places, or events in the students' own culture. To further guide them, refer them to the specific paragraph in the text which will serve as the composition model they are to imitate.

(3) *Question outline.* By writing answers to a number of questions arranged in a "chronological" order, the students can, in effect, write a paragraph or short composition.

(4) *Written summary.* Students can be instructed to write a summary of a literary selection.

Classroom Procedures: Lesson Plan

The following basic lesson plan is subject to modifications that you may find necessary to meet the specific needs of your students. As has been stated, the amount of class time you devote to each chapter will depend on the ability of your students. In general you should plan to spend five or six class periods on each chapter.

(1) *Introduction* to the study unit (the literary background). Plan to spend a minimum of *two class hours* on the introduction to each study unit. This material sets the stage for the literary selections contained in each unit by placing the author and his work within the proper historical context.

(2) *Literature selections.* In general the prose selections in each chapter are divided into two parts. You should plan to devote about *two hours to each part* or a total of four hours *to each chapter*. The chapters on poetry will take less time, probably two or three hours.

(3) *Summary.* Chapter discussion questions and review exercises plus any extra review material you yourself prepare

constitute the summary of the chapter. Generally, this procedure should take no more than *one class period*, although at times you may find it necessary to extend discussion for another class hour because of high student interest, unresolved questions, or language difficulties. Allow time at the end of each chapter to introduce the material of the succeeding chapter.

Classroom Procedures: General

(1) Begin each study unit by reading as much of the *Introduction* as possible in class, using the techniques suggested above. The beginning of a new study unit is a good place to instruct students to form a habit of intelligent guessing at the meaning of new words with the clues provided by the context. This does not mean, however, that you should not answer questions. You might like to make it a rule of the course that the dictionary is to be used *only* as a last resort. Since you will not have enough time to finish reading the *Introduction* on the first day of class, plan to assign the remainder of the material as a home reading exercise.

(2) The second day of class you will want to spend most of the period checking students' comprehension of the homework assigned and clarifying any points of difficulty they have encountered. To help the students synthesize and review the contents of the selection, a good device is for you to summarize the material through the use of judicious questions.

(3) From the *Introduction* you should plan to move to the literary selections themselves. Begin each chapter by assigning the essay about the author as homework. Go over the essay quickly in class the following day to ascertain general comprehension, but do not dwell on this material at this point. Plan to incorporate it later in your discussion of the entire chapter. Try to devote the class period to the literary selection, assigning the portion not read in class as homework. Help your students discover for themselves interesting aspects of the author's style, plot outline, or character development.

(4) The discussion questions and exercises at the end of each selection should be used as the culminating activity of each class hour and as chapter reviews. The discussion questions should afford the students an opportunity for a communicative language experience by the exchanging of ideas gained from their reading. Encourage students to react to each other's observations; supplement the questions in the text with some of your own; remembering that the *how* and *why* type of questions should prevail at this stage of the lesson.

Supplementary Techniques (Optional)

Depending on the rate at which your students are able to master the material of each chapter, you may find time to use some of the following techniques to enrich your classroom presentation.

(1) *Dramatization*. Certain selections or passages may lend themselves to adaption for dramatic presentation. You should choose a "cast" from among your best students to write the script as a team effort. After you have reviewed the script and made any necessary corrections, assign roles either to the script writers or to other students and have them act out the playlet for the whole class. If you have exceptionally talented students, it is also possible for you to assign parts in class for an impromptu dramatization of a situation ocurring in one of the selections. Besides the literary selections, the lives of the authors may offer material for this type of activity.

(2) *Note-Taking*. This activity can provide good training both in aural comprehension and writing. Recordings, tapes, sound filmstrips, and motion pictures are excellent aids for this kind of practice. You should acquaint your students with the techniques of note-taking before launching the project. Show the students how this type of exercise makes language a learning tool by developing in them an ability to cope independently with word recognition and meaning difficulties, as well as improving their ability to listen critically for main ideas. You should plan to give the students at least two exposures to the audio or audio-visual

material: the first time for them to get the central idea and the second time for them to pay attention to details. Instruct them to take general notes in outline form during the first viewing or listening and then to add important details during the second exposure. You may follow up the note-taking by assigning either a short speech or composition (150-200 words) based on the notes. Another possibility is a roundtable discussion of the audio-visual material, using one of your better students as moderator. Keep in mind that you should check comprehension before making the final assignment.

(3) *Outside Reading.* In very advanced classes independent reading can be an enriching and rewarding experience. Assign to individual students books related to the author or to a literary selection being studied. Brief oral reports of no more than 3-5 minutes are probably the best way for the students to share their newly-gained knowledge with the whole class. Written book reports are also a possibility. To aid the students in the preparation of the reports, provide them with some kind of outline to be followed in preparing the report.

(4) *Newspaper-TV Interview.* This technique can be used in a variety of ways. The objective is to simulate the interview of a famous person by a newspaper reporter or a radio/television interlocutor. You may have one student assume the role of one of the authors or of a character from a literary selection. Another student plays the role of the interlocutor. In a television interview members of the class also could be invited to ask questions of the interviewee. Another possibility is a guessing game similar to "Twenty Questions." In this variation, the class is not told who the interviewee is impersonating, but tries to discover the identity of the famous personality within the limit of 20 questions.

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